

HITTING
THE
MARK

*An Exposition of Paul's Epistle
to the Philippians*

Brian J. Bailey, D.D.

Version 1.0

Hitting the Mark:
An Exposition of Paul's Epistle to the Philippians
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PREFACE

The theme of this letter to the church of Philippi, apart from the profound theological studies concerning the mind of Christ and the first resurrection, is joy. It was written by Paul while he was in prison in Rome. Even though Paul resided in his own rented lodging, he was nonetheless chained to soldiers of the Praetorian Guard (or palace guard).

The epistle to the Philippians was written to a church that had relatively few problems, and therefore the Apostle Paul concentrates in this epistle of joy on these five main themes:

1. The need for unity
2. The blessings of sufferings
3. The mind of Christ
4. The first resurrection
5. The peace of God

Paul sets before this church a higher vision. Although they were walking in the light which they had, Paul wanted to place before them an onward vision that would keep them pressing on toward the mark.

Proverbs 29:18 says, “*Where there is no [progressive] vision, the people perish [or cast off all restraint].*” Unless we have a progressive vision that molds every facet of our lives, we cast off restraints and become careless in our

Christian walk. It is a progressive vision that causes us to run the race of life with purpose.

The key verse of this epistle, as illustrated on the front cover, is chapter 3:14, where Paul said, “*I press toward the mark for the prize of the high calling of God in Christ Jesus.*” A mark is a goal or target. The purpose of an arrow is to hit a mark. The same is true of our lives.

Paul was in his sixties when he wrote this epistle, only about six years before his martyrdom, and although he had accomplished so much in life, he realized that he had not finished his course or hit the mark of God for his life. Therefore, he was still pressing on. This is the fruit of having an ongoing vision within us.

Considering the circumstances in which this epistle was written, it is clear that the Apostle Paul knew the joy of the Lord to be his strength even in the most difficult and confining situations of life—like being physically chained to a rotating number of coarse Roman soldiers.

In the presence of the Lord, whom he so dearly loved, Paul found fullness of joy and contentment (cf. Ps. 16:11). My prayer is that this short commentary on Paul’s epistle of joy will be a blessing to you and cause you to know the joy of Jesus at all times. May it also be used to give you an ongoing vision for your individual life.

Brian J. Bailey

INTRODUCTION

The city of Philippi was originally known as Krenides, meaning *the place of fountains*, because of its numerous streams. It was renamed in honour of Philip II of Macedonia, the father of Alexander the Great. Philippi was strategically placed along what was called the Egnatian Way, the main route between the West and Asia.

It was a city of historical consequence in the days of the Roman Empire, for here the Republicans lost the last battle, Cassius died, and Antony defeated Brutus. Octavius, the colleague of Antony, gave Philippi the privileges of a colony as a perpetual memorial of his victory over Brutus, who committed suicide on October 23, 42 B.C.

Because Philippi was a colony, it was like a miniature Rome. Its citizens enjoyed the same privileges as the citizens of Rome. They paid the poll tax and a land tax, but they were free from the Roman provincial governor, and their affairs were regulated by their own magistrates. Philippi was populated principally by Italian settlers and Greeks, with very few Jews. This scarcity of Jews explains why there was no synagogue in Philippi for the Sabbath services.

The Apostle Paul went to the city of Philippi on his second missionary journey when he responded to the Macedonian call in Troas (see Acts 16:9-12). Paul arrived from Troas,

the seaport in Asia, and went straight to Samothracia, and the next day to Neapolis, the port town of Philippi (Acts 16:11-12). These port towns were often very close to the principal cities, like Cencrea to Corinth and Pireaus to Athens. By all accounts, there were approximately ten miles between Philippi and Neapolis. The high ridge of the Pangeus mountain range separated the two towns.

The place of prayer to which Paul and Silas and their companions customarily went on the Sabbath day was outside the city gate by the riverside. The church of Philippi was formed as a result of the conversion of Lydia, a seller of purple from Thyatira. Thyatira, one of the seven churches in the Book of Revelation, was renowned for its colour dyes and was very wealthy, as apparently was Lydia.

It was here in Philippi that Paul and Silas were wrongfully beaten after they had cast out a spirit of divination from a young girl. The owners of this young girl became incensed against Paul and Silas because they caused them to lose the revenue which they obtained from her fortune telling.

Imprisoned, with their feet secured fast in the stocks, “at midnight Paul and Silas prayed, and sang praises unto God: and the prisoners heard them. And suddenly there was a great earthquake, so that the foundations of the prison were shaken: and immediately all the doors were opened, and every one’s bands were loosed” (Acts 16:25-26). The Apostle Paul then led the jailer and his family to the Lord and they became born-again that day.

There were three principal people upon whom the church of Philippi was founded, and they came from very different backgrounds:

1. *Lydia*, a wealthy merchant who sold purple cloth from her native city of Thyatira, which was renowned for such dye
2. The young *slave girl*, who had been delivered from a spirit of divination
3. The *jailer*, who was a middle class civil servant of the Roman Empire

Nearly all of Paul's letters were written according to the pattern of the days of the Roman Empire. They were all composed basically of the following five sections:

1. The greetings
2. Prayers for the recipients of the letter
3. A thanksgiving
4. The main content or purpose of the letter
5. The conclusion, which consisted basically of salutations to some special individuals or greetings to friends

With this in mind, we can better appreciate the form of this epistle.

OUTLINE

- A. The Rejoicing Prisoner (1:1 - 2:2)**
 - 1. The greetings (1:1-2)
 - 2. Thanksgiving and prayers (1:3-11)
 - 3. The blessings of Paul's sufferings (1:12-20)
 - 4. Paul's hope (1:21-26)
 - 5. Unity enjoined (1:27; 2:1-2)
 - 6. Suffering for Christ (1:28-30)

- B. The Mind of Christ (2:3-11)**
 - 1. His self-abasement (2:3-8)
 - 2. His glorification (2:9-11)

- C. The Working Out of Our Salvation (2:12-18)**
 - 1. Our part (2:12)
 - 2. God's part (2:13)
 - 3. Right attitude in trials (2:14-16)
 - 4. The acceptable offering (2:17-18)

- D. Timothy the Spiritual Son (2:19-24)**

- E. Epaphroditus—The Patient, Suffering Servant (2:25-30)**

- F. The First Resurrection (3:1-15)**

- G. Paul the Example (3:16-21)**

- H. The Peace of God (4:1-9)**

- I. Holy Contentment (4:10-13)**

- J. The Love Gift (4:14-20)**

- K. Closing Salutation (4:21-23)**

MAP OF PHILIPPI



CHAPTER 1

The Rejoicing Prisoner

1:1 - 2:2

Philippians starts out with a very positive, triumphant note. Although the Apostle Paul is writing this letter to his friends in Philippi from prison in Rome, he has not lost the victory he has in Christ. Paul was *more than a conqueror* through Jesus Christ in every circumstance he faced (Rom. 8:37).

I have entitled this section *The Rejoicing Prisoner* because of Paul's rejoicing spirit while in prison. May the Lord birth his same rejoicing spirit in each one of us as we study this epistle together.

1. THE GREETING (1:1-2)

1:1 - "*Paul and Timotheus, the servants of Jesus Christ, to all the saints in Christ Jesus which are at Philippi, with the bishops and deacons.*" Paul includes his spiritual son and friend Timothy in his greeting to the saints at Philippi.

He calls Timothy and himself *servants* of Jesus Christ. The Greek word *doulos* translated *servants* means a slave or bondservant. It refers to one who is bound to another. Paul was acknowledging that he was in submission and subjection to the lordship of the Lord Jesus Christ.

Except for the Thessalonian epistles and Philemon, this is Paul's only letter that does not commence with the declaration of his apostleship. It is a letter to his friends and the church that appears to have been the closest to his heart.

Certainly, with the exception of the comments in chapter 4:2-3 to two ladies in the church who were in danger of jeopardizing the unity of the church by their quarrelling, there are no rebukes given to the Philippian church. This is unlike his epistles to the other churches, which contained many reprimands. Over the last eleven years, since its inception in A.D. 51, the church of Philippi had grown, and now included elders and deacons who were needed to care for the flock.

1:2 - "*Grace be unto you, and peace, from God our Father, and from the Lord Jesus Christ.*" Here Paul pronounces the twin benedictions of *grace* and *peace*. Grace means unmerited favour, and divine enablement to accomplish a task. Peace likewise has two connotations. As Christians, we have *peace with God* because of the shed blood of Jesus Christ, which breaks down the middle wall of partition that exists between us and God because of our sins. Christ also promised us the *peace of God*, which enables us to have serene composure in the midst of the storms of life (Jn. 14:27). This is the hallmark of a mature saint in Christ.

**A rejoicing spirit and a thankful heart
are keys to victorious living**

2. THANKSGIVING AND PRAYERS (1:3-11)

1:3 - “*I thank my God upon every remembrance of you.*”

Here is one of the key factors in victorious living for any pastor. It is to be thankful for every member of the congregation that the Lord has entrusted to his care. This is by no means easy, but it is a spiritual virtue that we should practice and exercise continually. We can fulfil the Lord’s commandment to love others by the grace of God as the love of God consumes us.

However, in the English language there is a distinct difference between *love* and *like*. After all, likes go to likes, and opposites repel and even repulse each other. A pastor is likely, according to his own spiritual life, to migrate to those who are godly, while the difficult and openly coarse members of his congregation are likely to receive merely a cursory salutation.

This, however, is not the demeanour of the truly spiritual man. It is actually the problem children who cause one to draw more upon the grace of God than do the righteous. We often grow in proportion to those who unsettle our lives by the troubles their sinful past has produced.

Also, we should understand that we must accept others, as Paul tells us in Romans 15:7: “Wherefore receive [or accept] ye one another, as Christ also received us to the glory of God.” We must also learn the virtue of condescending to men of low estate (Rom. 12:16). Every person has a purpose and a

part in the Lord's great plan of redemption for mankind. Thus Paul continues this theme in his prayer in verses 4-5:

1:4-5 - *“Always in every prayer of mine for you all making request with joy, For your fellowship in the gospel from the first day until now.”* Paul is not only thankful for all the Philippian believers, but he also rejoices in their friendship and fellowship. This is truly loving one another as Christ loved us. Paul loved them from the very first day he met them. His heart was enlarged to receive them as Christ Himself. Paul's love for the Philippians produced an assurance in the very depths of his heart that the Lord would complete the good work He had begun in their lives.

1:6 - *“Being confident of this very thing, that he which hath begun a good work in you will perform [or complete] it until the day of Jesus Christ.”* One of the exquisite beauties of Christ is found in His name the Alpha and Omega, meaning that He finishes what He begins. Paul calls Him the Author and Finisher of our faith. Therefore, the work of redemption that He has begun in us, He most surely will complete.

What a blessed assurance it is for us to know that we can be made vessels of honour to be used for His glory as we humbly submit to His dealings in our lives. Why does Paul have such great assurance with respect to his Philippian friends? He now tells us in verse 7:

1:7 - *“Even as it is meet for me to think this of you all, because I have you in my heart; inasmuch as both in my*

bonds, and in the defence and confirmation of the gospel, ye all are partakers of my grace.” The reason Paul was confident that the Lord would complete the work he had started in them is because Paul had a special place for them in his heart. Paul’s love for them produced faith in his heart that the Philippians would succeed. His love released faith for them. They were partakers of the grace the Lord had bestowed upon Paul.

This is absolutely essential for leadership. If we are leaders, especially pastors, we must not only love and care for those who are close to us, but each member of the congregation must have a place in our heart. God gave Solomon largeness of heart to be the king of Israel so that all of God’s people would have a place in his heart (1 Ki. 4:29).

God wants to enlarge our hearts so that we will genuinely care and be concerned for all those whom God has entrusted to us. This is the mark of a true shepherd.

The high priests in the Old Testament wore a breastplate over their ephod. Upon this breastplate were written the names of the twelve tribes of Israel. Their names were written over the high priest’s heart. To be priests of God today, we must have an enlarged heart to love and care for all of God’s people. If we do, we will bring forth mature saints who are perfected for the ministry the Lord has purposed for them.

1:8 - *“For God is my record, how greatly I long after you all in the bowels of Jesus Christ.”* Paul experienced the yearnings

of a father toward the Philippian believers for whom he travailed in birth that Christ would be formed in them.

1:9 - *“And this I pray, that your love may abound yet more and more in knowledge and in all judgment.”* As we have said before, the Philippian believers formed a model congregation. Therefore, this epistle is really an exhortation to continue in the right path in which they were already walking and to go on to perfection.

Paul will develop this theme later in this epistle. Paul is encouraging them to increase in the love of Christ that is within them in two aspects: in knowledge and in judgment.

Knowledge

While it is not the purpose of this book to make an exhaustive treatise of the subject of love, a subject which is developed in more detail in our book entitled *The Comforter*, I would just like to say that love is developed through an ever-increasing understanding of the following four points:

- 1. We must love the Lord.** In Matthew 22:37, Christ said, “Thou shalt love the Lord thy God with all thy heart, and with all thy soul, and with all thy mind.”
- 2. We must love our neighbours.** The Lord went on to say in Matthew 22:39, “Thou shalt love thy neighbour as thyself.”

3. **We must love our enemies.** In Matthew 5:44, Christ said, “Love your enemies, bless them that curse you, do good to them that hate you, and pray for them which despitefully use you, and persecute you.”

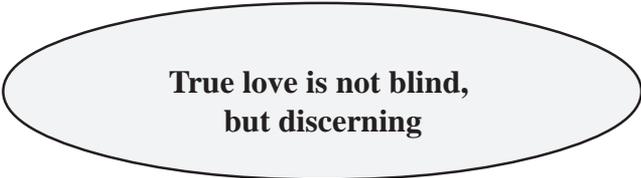
4. **Love is a fruit of the Spirit.** Galatians 5:22-23 says, “But the fruit of the Spirit is love, joy, peace, longsuffering, gentleness, goodness, faith, meekness, temperance [or self-control]...”

Judgment

The Greek word here translated “judgment” could also be rendered *sensitive perception*. Therefore, the Apostle Paul is telling the Philippians that their love should be cradled in good sense. To help illustrate what Paul is saying, I will use an example from everyday life. Although a mother dearly loves her child, she would never give him things that are not good for him. Even if her child begs and pleads for something that is harmful for him, she will not give in to his wishes. The mother must exercise love governed by good sense and not yield to the child’s demands.

In other words, Paul was telling the Philippians that their love should not be *blind*. Love must be discerning. We must be able to discern between those who are truly serving the Lord and those who are not (Mal. 3:18). This was King Jehoshaphat’s problem. He felt he should love people even if they were blatantly walking in sin and rebellion against the Lord.

While it is true that we must always love the sinner and hate the sin, we cannot make alliances with those who are not walking in God's ways. This is where Jehoshaphat erred. He was a good man who loved the Lord, but his lack of discernment caused him sorrow after sorrow. First he made an alliance with the wicked king of Israel, Ahab. Jehoshaphat said to Ahab in 2 Chronicles 18:3, "I am as thou art, and my people as thy people; and we will be with thee in the war." In other words, Jehoshaphat was saying to Ahab, who was despised by the Lord for his wicked ways: "You are my brother in the Lord. I'm a Jew; you're a Jew. We are both God's people."



**True love is not blind,
but discerning**

The Lord rebuked Jehoshaphat for this in 2 Chronicles 19:2: "Shouldest thou help the ungodly, and love them that hate the LORD? therefore is wrath upon thee from before the LORD." This kind of undiscerning love has brought compromise after compromise into the Church today. How can we embrace those who hold beliefs contrary to God's Word and do not walk in God's ways? Yet that is what much of the Church is doing today. This was as great a problem in the days of Paul as it is today, and that is why Paul told these believers to grow in *discerning* love.

1:10 - “*That ye may approve [or discern] things that are excellent; that ye may be sincere and without offence till the day of Christ.*” This concept flows with Paul’s admonition in Romans 12:2, where he exhorts the Roman Christians to prove what is the good and acceptable and perfect will of God. The Greek word translated “approve” is *dokimazein*, which is a word used for testing metals as to their genuineness. It means *to approve after testing*.

The thought Paul is trying to convey is that we should test every situation we encounter so that we are not deceived by the enemy. Also, Paul was saying that we should differentiate between matters that are important and others that are side issues which will sidetrack us from the purposes of God.

What is of real value and what is not?—that is the question we must always ask ourselves.

We must be sincere and have pure motives. The Greek word *eilikrines* for “sincere” means *to be pure*. The meaning of this word speaks of being *flawless*. The Lord examines us to see if there are any flaws in us, just as a prospective buyer examines a vase in the light to check for any flaws. God wants us to be without offence and blameless so that we are not a stumblingblock to others. God forbid that others should fall into sin because of our lifestyle. John wrote in 1 John 2:10, “He that loveth his brother abideth in the light, and [there is nothing in him that would cause others to stumble].”

1:11 - *“Being filled with the fruits of righteousness, which are by Jesus Christ, unto the glory and praise of God.”* As the Lord Himself said, out of the abundance of the heart a man speaks and acts (Mt. 12:34; Lk. 6:45). If our hearts are filled with the fruit of the blessed Holy Spirit, our lives will give honour and glory to the Lord.

3. THE BLESSINGS OF PAUL’S SUFFERINGS (1:12-20)

One of the doctrines of the Word of God that is so difficult for many to understand is suffering. For this reason, before we exegete the following passage, let us briefly examine several different aspects of suffering:

1. Suffering for our own personal sins - 1 Peter 4:1-2 says: “Forasmuch then as Christ hath suffered for us in the flesh, arm yourselves likewise with the same mind: for he that hath suffered in the flesh hath ceased from sin. That he no longer should live the rest of his time in the flesh to the lusts of men, but to the will of God.” Suffering for our own personal sins is the only way whereby we cease from sin.

2. Suffering to learn obedience - As with Christ, we learn obedience by the things we suffer. Hebrews 5:8 says of Christ, “Though he were a Son, yet learned he obedience by the things which he suffered.” This is not speaking of the sufferings that Christ endured upon the cross, but rather those things that He suffered in His formative years while under the shadow of His Father’s hand (Isa. 49:2).

3. Suffering for Christ's sake - Philippians 1:29 says, "For unto you it is given in the behalf of Christ, not only to believe on him, but also to suffer for his sake." The sufferings Christ experienced, which we will call the fellowship of the sufferings of the Father, were being betrayed and rejected by His own people. Christ had to know the heart of His Father, so He had to experience what His Father experienced.

God the Father was betrayed by Satan and his angels when they rebelled, and also by the majority of mankind, who have turned their backs upon His goodness and declared that they will not submit to His rulership. Experiencing the fellowship of these same sufferings is what it means to suffer for His sake.

4. Suffering vicariously - The fourth aspect of suffering is suffering vicariously for the sins of others in order that they may be brought into the fold of God. This is what Christ experienced upon the cross. He didn't go to the cross to bleed and die for Himself; He died in our place. 1 Peter 3:18 says, "For Christ also hath once suffered for sins, the just for the unjust, that he might bring us to God, being put to death in the flesh, but quickened by the Spirit." Christ suffered vicariously for us.

Paul also suffered for the sake of others, as he said in Colossians 1:24, "Who now rejoice in my sufferings for you, and fill up that which is behind of the afflictions of Christ in my flesh for his body's sake, which is the church." (See 1 Cor. 4:10-13; 2 Cor. 4:7-12; 6:3-10). As we die daily, we

release the life of Christ to others. When a person suffers on behalf of another, he releases the grace of God to him.

Certainly, there are more aspects to suffering than those which we have just enumerated. Paul now considers another perspective as he explains the trials through which he is passing as a prisoner of Caesar. We have entitled this portion of the epistle *The Blessings of Paul's Sufferings*.

1:12 - *“But I would ye should understand, brethren, that the things which happened unto me have fallen out rather unto the furtherance of the gospel.”* Paul shows us here the outworking of Romans 8:28, which says, “And we know that all things work together for good to them that love God, to them who are the called according to his purpose.” These were not just eloquent words; they were a deep conviction in Paul’s own life. Paul was convinced deep in his heart that everything which had happened to him was working together for his good and for the purposes of God.

The chain Paul wore upon his wrists was being used to advance the Gospel message and to spread the good news. This prison experience gave Paul an opportunity to testify to the Roman soldiers of the Imperial Guard whom Paul never would have met if he had not been imprisoned. God wanted the Gospel to penetrate into this otherwise closed class of society.

1:13 - *“So that my bonds in Christ are manifest in all the palace, and in all other places.”* Chained to one member of

the Imperial Guard after another, Paul was in effect preaching the Gospel to the cream of the Roman army.

1:14 - *“And many of the brethren in the Lord, waxing confident by my bonds, are much more bold to speak the word without fear.”* Because of his boldness, his companions were not afraid to preach Christ in the heart of the Empire. Paul’s great courage and overcoming spirit in his time of weakness were used to strengthen many. Paul’s friends clearly understood that he was not guilty of the crimes of which he had been accused.

1:15-17 - *“Some indeed preach Christ even of envy and strife; and some also of good will: The one preach Christ of contention, not sincerely, supposing to add affliction to my bonds: But the other of love, knowing that I am set for the defence of the gospel.”* However, there were others who were not so charitable and used Paul’s imprisonment as an occasion to speak out against Paul in their sermons. Have we not all experienced similar situations when we have been decried or vilified by others from the pulpit?

1:18 - *“What then? notwithstanding, every way, whether in pretence, or in truth, Christ is preached; and I therein do rejoice, yea, and will rejoice.”* How do we overcome personal attacks by fellow brethren who have turned against us or perhaps have never known us and yet have taken up someone else’s offence against us? Paul shows us how to triumph in verse 18. We must look beyond the person who is attacking us and look to the Lord Jesus Christ. Our goal should not be to protect our own personal reputation, which at times can be

sullied in the mire of gossip. As with the Apostle Paul, our goal and desire in life should be that Christ is lifted up and His most glorious name is magnified.

1:19 - *“For I know that this shall turn to my salvation through your prayer, and the supply of the Spirit of Jesus Christ.”* Paul could rejoice in the midst of these persecutions because he knew the end of the matter. He knew the Lord was going to turn the curse into a blessing. Paul was loved by many people, and they prayed diligently for him during this trial. Their prayers caused these persecutions to turn into a blessing for him.

When we are going through a trial, as the saints pray for us that we might have a good attitude, the Lord actually turns these attacks upon our character for our good. Remember our Lord’s own words in the Beatitudes in Matthew 5:11-12: “Blessed are ye, when men shall revile you, and persecute you, and shall say all manner of evil against you falsely, for my sake. Rejoice, and be exceeding glad: for great is your reward in heaven: for so persecuted they the prophets which were before you.”

The key word is to *rejoice*, and as we maintain a rejoicing spirit, we will exude at all times the sweetness of Jesus, who said, “Father, forgive them for they know not what they do.” It is so important that we do not become offended by attacks from our brethren. When we become offended, the root of bitterness creeps into our lives, and instead of manifesting the love of Jesus, we cause many to become

defiled by our offense (Heb. 12:15). A rejoicing spirit will keep our hearts free of bitterness and a wounded and offended spirit, enabling us to have complete victory in Christ.

1:20 - *“According to my earnest expectation and my hope, that in nothing I shall be ashamed, but that with all boldness, as always, so now also Christ shall be magnified in my body, whether it be by life, or by death.”* It is essential, even as Paul states in Ephesians 4:15, that we speak, preach, and testify of the truth that is in Christ in the spirit of love so that in all situations Christ can be glorified in us—whether it is our time to die or live.

4. PAUL’S HOPE (1:21-26)

1:21 - *“For to me to live is Christ, and to die is gain.”* Paul’s burning desire in life was, having been crucified with Christ, to live his life by the faith of the Son of God (Gal. 2:20). He says it would be better for him to die than to live. However, he faced a dilemma, as he now explains.

1:22-24 - *“If I am to go on living in the body, this will mean fruitful labour for me. Yet what shall I choose? I do not know! I am torn between the two: I desire to depart and be with Christ, which is better by far; but it is more necessary for you that I remain in the body” (NIV).*

To go to heaven was far better for the Apostle Paul, but his converts and spiritual children on earth still needed him.

Therefore, he made the decision to continue on in this earthly life for a few more profitable years.

1:25-26 - *“And having this confidence, I know that I shall abide and continue with you all for your furtherance and joy of faith. That your rejoicing may be more abundant in Jesus Christ for me by my coming to you again.”* This may seem strange for some that Paul could decide the time of his departure to heaven, but let me try to explain it.

Some years ago, having gone through severe trials, I asked the Lord to take me home to be with Him. That night I died and the angel who had come for me took me to heaven. Just before I entered into heaven, before I actually crossed the river and went through the gates, the Lord showed me that I had not fulfilled my course. You cannot imagine the terrible sadness I felt in the whole of my being. After I pleaded with the Lord, He allowed me to return to earth so I could finish my course.

Therefore, to a certain degree I believe, with Paul, that our will can definitely be a factor in the time of our death. Paul chose to remain for a few more years because it would enable his friends to receive more of the grace of God and be advanced spiritually.

5. UNITY ENJOINED (1:27; 2:1-2)

The Apostle Paul now addresses the one problem which was troubling the saintly Philippian church—the need to be united

in mind and spirit as they walked together to fulfil the purposes of God for their lives. A lack of unity is one of the biggest problems today in just about every church around the world.

1:27 - *“Only let your conversation be as it becometh the gospel of Christ: that whether I come and see you, or else be absent, I may hear of your affairs, that ye stand fast in one spirit, with one mind striving together for the faith of the gospel.”* Our *conversation*, of course, includes our speech as well as our whole behaviour in life.

A church must speak with one voice in all things. We have seen in our days that a fragmented and, therefore, weak church has very little impact upon the affairs of our nations. Dissension will imperil any church. However, as revival comes and the Church becomes united, the triumphant Church will become the head, and not the tail as it is today (cf. Deut. 28:13).

There are basically four aspects of unity in the Holy Scriptures. These four sequential steps of unity will lead us and our congregations to true unity.

1. Unity of the Heart

Personal unity, having unity in one’s own heart, is illustrated in the prayer of King David in Psalm 86:11: “Teach me thy way, O LORD; I will walk in thy truth: unite my heart to fear thy name.” It is only when we have dealt with the divisions in our own heart that we can expect to be united

with other saints. We can only serve one master, as Jesus said in Matthew 6:24: “No man can serve two masters: for either he will hate the one, and love the other; or else he will hold to the one, and despise the other. Ye cannot serve God and mammon.” We need to ask God to create a pure heart in us so that we are not torn between serving the cares, riches, and pleasures of this world and serving the Lord. A believer who has a united heart always puts the Lord first in his life.

2. Unity of the Spirit

In the Charismatic movement of the 1960’s and 1970’s, the Lord poured out His Holy Spirit upon virtually every denomination, baptizing them in the Spirit with the accompanying signs of speaking with other tongues, as well as the nine gifts of the Spirit mentioned in 1 Corinthians 12:7-10. Thus those who were baptized in the Holy Spirit were united because of their common experience. However, when they began talking about their other denominational doctrinal beliefs, they were in disagreement. That is why Paul exhorts us in Ephesians 4:3 to “make every effort to keep the unity of the Spirit through the bond of peace” (NIV).

3. The Unity of the Faith

The unity of the faith is the goal and purpose of the fivefold ministry. The ministry is to produce unity of faith and doctrine. Paul said in Ephesians 4:11-13: “And [the Lord] gave some, apostles; and some, prophets; and some, evangelists; and some, pastors and teachers; For the perfecting of the saints, for the work of the ministry, for the edifying of the body of Christ: Till

we all come in the unity of the faith, and of the knowledge of the Son of God, unto a perfect man, unto the measure of the stature of the fullness of Christ.”

Isaiah 52:8 is a prophecy of the Millennium, but also of the last days. “Thy watchmen shall lift up the voice; with the voice together shall they sing: for they shall see eye to eye, when the Lord shall bring again Zion.” In the last day revival, the Church will come to unity of doctrine and faith. The Holy Spirit—the abiding anointing who teaches us all things—will make it abundantly clear to everyone which doctrines are of God and which doctrines are not (see 1 Jn. 2:27). Therefore, by the ministry of godly teachers who are anointed by the Holy Spirit, the Church of Jesus Christ will speak with one voice in these last days as we enter into the fulfilment of the glorious Feast of Tabernacles.

4. Unity of the Brethren

This final stage of unity may best be understood by Psalm 133. “Behold, how good and how pleasant it is for brethren to dwell together in unity! It is like the precious ointment upon the head, that ran down upon the beard, even Aaron’s beard: that went down to the skirts of his garments; As the dew of Hermon, and as the dew that descended upon the mountains of Zion: for there the LORD commanded the blessing, even life for evermore.”

The key to the unity of the brethren, wherein everyone is in harmony and unity, lies in the interpretation of the constituents

of the anointing ointment that was poured over the head of Aaron.

These constituents are described in Exodus 30:23-25,30: “Take thou also unto thee principal spices, of pure myrrh five hundred shekels, and of sweet cinnamon half so much, even two hundred and fifty shekels, and of sweet calamus two hundred and fifty shekels, And of cassia five hundred shekels, after the shekel of the sanctuary, and of oil olive an hin: And thou shalt make it an oil of holy ointment, an ointment compound after the art of the apothecary: it shall be an holy anointing oil ... And thou shalt anoint Aaron and his sons, and consecrate them, that they may minister unto me in the priest’s office.”

These principal spices have the following spiritual significance:

Myrrh speaks of the *meekness* of Christ. Meekness enables us to accept everything that happens to us with holy resignation and joy.

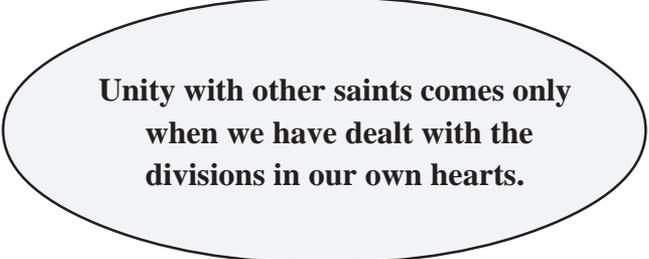
Sweet cinnamon speaks of *goodness*. Everything we do or say to a person must be done with his ultimate good in mind.

Sweet calamus speaks of *gentleness*. In our treatment of others, especially our spouses, we should be as gentle as a nurse who cares for the young.

Cassia speaks of *humility*. This is the posture of the poor in spirit.

Olive oil speaks of *peace*. We need to have the peace of God, which will garrison our minds and hearts at all times.

When these graces and virtues are worked out in our lives, we can live and dwell in unity and harmony with the brethren.



**Unity with other saints comes only
when we have dealt with the
divisions in our own hearts.**

6. SUFFERING FOR CHRIST (1:28-30)

1:28 - “*And in nothing terrified by your adversaries: which is to them an evident token of perdition, but to you of salvation, and that of God.*” Paul now returns to his theme of suffering, for it appears that his beloved friends in Philippi are experiencing persecution from various kinds of people, as he expounds in chapter 3:2.

Paul exhorts his friends not to be afraid of wicked people, but rather to be of good courage. The wicked will be destroyed, but the righteous will inherit eternal salvation. Their serene demeanour will be a witness against their persecutors. The

failure of the Philippian saints to be terrified by the hostility of their adversaries was clear proof to these ungodly people that they would be destroyed. By enduring suffering with good courage, we are participating in the sufferings of Christ, who has experienced far greater persecution than we will ever know.

1:29 - *“For unto you it is given in the behalf of Christ, not only to believe on him, but also to suffer for his sake.”* It has been granted to each believer the *privilege* (and I do say privilege) of suffering for Christ. Many of today’s Church leaders have lost the spirit of the early apostles, who counted it a great honour to suffer for the Lord. Acts 5:41 says, “And [the apostles] departed from the presence of the council, rejoicing that they were counted worthy to suffer shame for his name.”

Many preachers today say that Christians should not have to suffer. Well, the truth of the matter is that the Christian who has not suffered will not have a great reward in heaven, nor will he know the Lord in an intimate way. It is to those who have suffered that the Lord gives the oil of joy (Isa. 61:3).

William Booth, the founder of the Salvation Army, early in his life had a vision of a group of Christians in heaven who were filled with tremendous joy. They were rejoicing in the presence of the Lord. Then the Lord turned, looked at William Booth, and said, “How can you, who have never suffered, ever know their joy?” It is suffering that causes us to know the joy of Jesus which Paul knew.

Let us also remember, beloved, that if we suffer with Christ, we shall also reign with Him. Paul said in 2 Timothy 2:12, “If we suffer, we shall also reign with him: if we deny him, he also will deny us.”

1:30 - *“Having the same conflict which ye saw in me, and now hear to be in me.”* Paul now speaks of the conflict he had. To understand what Paul is talking about, we must look at his companion epistle to the Colossians, for Paul also spoke of this conflict in Colossians 2:1: “For I would that ye knew what great conflict I have for you, and for them at Laodicea, and for as many as have not seen my face in the flesh.” This conflict was most likely spiritual in nature. As Paul prayed, he was fighting against demonic powers which were afflicting him in his body.

The Apostle Paul also spoke of beasts with which he had fought at Ephesus (1 Cor. 15:32). These were demonic forces in the forms of beasts, for “we wrestle not against flesh and blood, but against principalities, against powers, against the rulers of the darkness of this world, against spiritual wickedness in high places” (Eph. 6:12).

The Need For Unity Stressed Again (2:1-2)

2:1-2 - *“If there be therefore any consolation in Christ, if any comfort of love, if any fellowship of the Spirit, if any bowels and mercies, Fulfil ye my joy, that ye be likeminded, having the same love, being of one accord, of one mind.”* The intense yearning of the heart, and indeed of the whole of Paul’s being,

can be sensed in these verses. He was longing and seeking for the one thing he knew would ensure that the church would mature, namely that they be joined together in that bond of love. When believers are in one accord and have the same mind, they flow together in word and action.

Note the pathos of a pleading father as Paul uses words filled with great emotion such as *comfort*, *consolation*, and *bowels of mercies*, declaring that his joy will only be complete when they are of one accord. The power of unity is tremendous. In fact, people who are united in purpose are virtually invincible.

This applies even in a negative sense, as in the case of the tower of Babel. God said in Genesis 11:6, “Behold, the people is one, and they have all one language; and this they begin to do: and now nothing will be restrained from them, which they have imagined to do.” The people who were building the tower of Babel had *one language*. This not only means that they had a common mother language, but they spoke the same things, because they all had the same mind.

Because of their common purpose and unity to bring it to pass, the Lord said that nothing would restrain them. In a positive sense, if the Church of Jesus Christ is united to do His will and to see His glory come to the nations, nothing will be able to stop this onward march of the saints of God—not even the gates of hell (Mt. 16:18). May we, therefore, take this passage to heart and seek to have unity in our marriage, in our home, at our workplace, and in our churches.

CHAPTER 2

The Mind of Christ

2:3-11

This section is one of the most profound theological statements in the whole of the Word of God. Marked by great eloquence, this passage develops Christ's self-emptying, incarnation, death on the cross, resurrection, and subsequent exaltation to the right hand of the Father. Paul tells us to have this same mind which Christ had.

2:3 - *“Let nothing be done through strife or vainglory; but in lowliness of mind let each esteem other better than themselves.”* Paul begins this passage on the mind of Christ by speaking of the importance of and the need for humility. Humility is the key to every fresh blessing from the Lord, for God pours out His grace upon the humble.

It is after every valley of Baca (weeping) experience, where God does a deeper work of humility in our lives, that God takes us to greater heights in Him and we have a mountaintop experience with Him (see Ps. 84:6-7).

Paul tells us that we should not do anything out of strife or through vain conceit (or empty glorying). In lowliness of mind, we should esteem others better than ourselves. Pride will cause us to think we are better than others, but humility of mind

will enable us to prefer one another before ourselves. Paul said in Romans 12:10, “Be kindly affectioned one to another with brotherly love; in honour preferring one another.”

Humility is rooted in three aspects of truth:

1. We are created beings. David declared to the Lord in Psalm 8:3-4: “When I consider thy heavens, the work of thy fingers, the moon and the stars, which thou hast ordained; What is man, that thou art mindful of him? and the son of man, that thou visitest him?”

As David was taking a walk at night, he contemplated the vastness of the heavens. This caused David to see himself in proper perspective. King David realized how insignificant he was without the Lord. This is the first step in obtaining humility. We must realize that we are created beings, and see ourselves in true perspective.

When flying in an airplane miles above ground level, we can see how small man really is. In actuality, we are very small in God’s vast creation. Meditating upon this truth will begin to make us humble.

2. We are fallen sinners. The next step to humility is realizing that we are all fallen sinners. Paul said in Romans 3:23, “For all have sinned, and come short of the glory of God.” Every single man and woman has sinned and come short of the glory of God. We all need a Saviour, and apart from Him we are nothing.

3. We are all recipients of God's grace. The third step to humility is understanding experientially what Paul said in 1 Corinthians 15:10: "But by the grace of God I am what I am: and his grace which was bestowed upon me was not in vain; but I laboured more abundantly than they all: yet not I, but the grace of God which was with me."

This must be a deep conviction in our lives. We must not only say it with our lips, but we must be convinced in our minds and hearts that we can do nothing by our own strength. Everything we will ever accomplish and ever become is only because of God's grace.

As we contemplate and meditate upon these three aspects of truth, and we cry out for the grace of God to renew our minds, we will receive the humility and mind of Christ.

2:4 - *"Look not every man on his own things, but every man also on the things of others."* The NIV translation reads, "Each of you should look not only to your own interests, but also to the interests of others." We need to lay down our lives for others, just as Christ laid down His life for us.

Paul is dealing with strife in this epistle. Contention and division come only by pride (Prov. 13:10). Therefore, Paul exhorts the Philippian believers to take upon themselves the humility of Christ and walk in unity. The greatest obstacle to unity is proud minds that are puffed up. Humility, therefore, is the key to unity.

The Kenosis of Christ

In Philippians 2:5-11 Paul develops what is known as the *Kenosis* (or self-emptying) of Christ and His subsequent exaltation by the Father. The Greek word *kenosis* means “to empty” (KJV - *made Himself of no reputation*). Jesus took seven steps downward from His heavenly position and status to His death upon the cross.

After He divested Himself of His heavenly glories and became obedient to the death of the cross, the Father exalted Him and gave Him a name which is above every other name.

The Seven Steps in the *Kenosis* of Christ

1. He let go of His equality with God
2. He made Himself of no reputation
3. He took upon Himself the form of a servant
4. He was made in the likeness of men
5. He humbled Himself
6. He became obedient unto death
7. Even the death of the cross

2:5 - “*Let this mind be in you, which was also in Christ Jesus.*” Paul exhorts us to have the mind of Christ, which is

humbleness of mind (Col. 3:12). Humility always begins in our mind and in our thought-life. The key to Christ's humility was His mind. Humility, basically, is having a proper opinion of ourselves, realizing that truly we are nothing without Christ. Transformation begins in our minds, as Paul tells us in Romans 12:2: "Be ye transformed by the renewing of your mind."

Paul says in 2 Corinthians 10:4-5, "For the weapons of our warfare are not carnal, but mighty through God to the pulling down of strong holds; casting down imaginations, and every high thing that exalteth itself against the knowledge of God, and bringing into captivity every thought to the obedience of Christ."

Many of the strongholds of pride and the self-life are in the mind. Therefore, in order to be transformed, our minds need to be renewed. Pride always comes into a person and gets a stronghold in his life when his mind becomes puffed up. Colossians 2:18 speaks of the carnal man who is "puffed up by his fleshly mind."

2:6 - *"Who, being in the form of God [possessing all the attributes of God and being the very essence of God Himself], thought it not robbery to be equal with God."* The first step downward which Christ took was that He let go of His equality with God. Christ was the only begotten Son of the Father. He was supreme in heaven next to the Father. He was the co-Creator of the world and man (Col. 1:16). Yet He was willing to submit to God the Father in order to redeem mankind.

The original text gives the understanding that Christ did not hold on to His equality with God when the will of God revealed to Him the need to relinquish that position. He did not grasp on to His position; His desire was to do the will of His Father. Christ said in John 6:38, “For I came down from heaven, not to do mine own will, but the will of him that sent me.” We never want to clutch to anything (including a position or ministry). We should always seek to put the will of God first.

2:7 - *“But made himself of no reputation, and took upon him the form of a servant, and was made in the likeness of men:”* Christ made Himself of no reputation. So many people zealously try to guard their reputation at any cost. Yet Christ, the very Son of God, did not seek a reputation or the praise of man. All that mattered to Him was doing the will of His Father.

The Shulamite (a type of the Bride of Christ) said in Song of Solomon 5:7, “The watchmen that went about the city found me, they smote me, they wounded me; the keepers of the walls took away my veil from me.” The watchmen, which speak of ministers and leaders, took away the veil (or reputation) of the Shulamite.

If we are going to go on with the Lord and know Him in an intimate way, we likewise shall experience a stripping of our reputation, usually by other Christians. Paul emptied himself of his reputation as a Pharisee of Pharisees, as a student of Gamaliel, and as one of the up-and-coming teachers in the Jewish faith to become the persecuted witness of Christ.

This phrase “He made Himself of no reputation” literally means from the Greek that Christ emptied Himself. He laid down all of His rights, privileges, and divine prerogatives. The glory He had with His Father before the foundation of the world was veiled while He was upon earth. Christ prayed in John 17:5 just before He was about to go to the cross, “And now, O Father, glorify thou me with thine own self with the glory which I had with thee before the world was.”

“And took upon him the form of a servant.” The Lord Jesus Christ took upon Himself the nature of a servant (or bondsman). Christ said in Mark 10:45, “For even the Son of man came not to be ministered unto, but to minister, and to give his life a ransom for many.” Jesus came not as the King of Kings, but as the Servant of all. He said in Mark 9:35, “If any man desire to be first, the same shall be last of all, and servant of all.”

In the upper room, after the last supper, Jesus wrapped a towel around His waist, poured water into a basin and began to wash His disciples’ feet. This was the position of a servant to wash the feet of others. Yet Christ did this because He had laid down His right to be the Lord of all at this time so He could be the Servant of all. Let us also cry out to have this same servant’s heart as our Lord, and not demand better conditions or better treatment.

“And was made in the likeness of men ... and being found in fashion as a man.” In the incarnation, Jesus, the Son of God, took upon Himself the nature of man. Hebrews 2:17 tells us that He was made like us in all things. Paul says in

Hebrews 4:15, “For we have not an high priest which cannot be touched with the feeling of our infirmities; but was in all points tempted like as we are, yet without sin.” Christ was tempted in every area in which man is tempted, yet the difference between Christ and us is that He never sinned. He was tempted like we are, but He never yielded to temptation.

The Lord Jesus experienced everything that we face in life. Because He took on the nature of man and overcame the temptations we face, He is able to help us in our times of temptation. Beloved, many times the Lord passes us through trials and temptations so that we can have compassion on those who are bound in these same areas (Heb. 5:2). The Lord’s desire is not that we condemn them in their state (nor condone what they do), but lift them up and help them get victory in those areas.

2:8 - *“And being found in fashion as a man, he humbled himself, and became obedient unto death, even the death of the cross.”*

“He humbled Himself.” Christ, the Heir of all things, adopted the position of one who was subject to those who mocked Him. It is awe-inspiring that Christ crouched down to submit to the dictates of those who were the most disreputable of the human race. Christ has set before us a pattern to follow. The desire of the Father is to make us like Christ and to mold us into His image. Let us seek to submit ourselves to the circumstances in which God the Father in His sovereign wisdom chooses to place us.

“He became obedient unto death.” To become obedient and die in the will of God is surely the acme and zenith of submission. When we study the life of Christ in its entirety, we realize that He was born with one objective, and that was to die. We, then, can have no other purpose in life either; for we, too, should be poured out like wine and become broken bread for the multitudes. We must be willing to give ourselves to those who would smite us and tear the skin off of our faces as they did to Christ.

“Even the death of the cross.” Christ not only submitted Himself to dying, but He suffered the lowest form of death known to the world in His day. The cross was deemed such an ignominious death that Roman citizens could not be nailed to the cross. In reality, it was reserved for the most despicable of mankind. Even in the Holy Scriptures, it is written in Deuteronomy 21:22-23: “If a man has committed a sin deserving of death, and he is put to death, and you hang him on a tree, his body shall not remain overnight on the tree, but you shall surely bury him that day, so that you do not defile the land which the LORD your God is giving you as an inheritance; for he who is hanged is accursed of God” (NKJV). We refer you to our book entitled *The Cross* for a more detailed study of the Lord’s death and crucifixion.

Christ humbled Himself and took these seven steps downward. To the degree that we allow the Lord to humble us and break us, to that same degree He will exalt us. Before Christ could ascend to His exalted status in the heavens at the right hand of the Father, He had to descend into the depths of the earth

in seeming defeat. Ephesians 4:9 says, “Now this, ‘He ascended’; what does it mean but that He also first descended into the lower parts of the earth?” (NKJV). First Peter 5:6 says, “Humble yourselves therefore under the mighty hand of God, that he may exalt you in due time.” If we humble ourselves and follow Christ’s example of being a servant and obedient to the will of God, in due time He will lift us up and exalt us. Thus in verses 9-11 we now see the seven steps of Christ’s exaltation.

The Seven Steps of Christ’s Exaltation

1. God highly exalted Him
2. God gave Him a name which is above every name
3. That at the name of Jesus every knee should bow
4. Things in heaven
5. Things in earth
6. Things under the earth
7. That every tongue should confess that Jesus Christ is Lord

2:9-11 - *“Wherefore God also hath highly exalted him, and given him a name which is above every name: That at the name of Jesus every knee should bow, of things in heaven,*

and things in earth, and things under the earth; And that every tongue should confess that Jesus Christ is Lord, to the glory of God the Father.”

Let us briefly examine the seven steps of Christ’s exaltation:

1. God hath highly exalted Him - Jesus is seated today at the right hand of the Majesty on high. Hebrews 1:3 tells us that after His ascension, Christ “sat down on the right hand of the Majesty on high.” He has the pre-eminent position in the whole of the universe. He is next to God the Father.

2. God gave Him a name which is above every name - Peter said in Acts 4:10-12 that it was through the name of Jesus Christ of Nazareth that the lame man at the temple was healed, saying, “Neither is there salvation in any other [than Christ]: for there is none other name under heaven given among men, whereby we must be saved.” Christ’s name, the *Lord Jesus Christ*, is the only name which men can call upon to be saved, for He alone is Lord. Joel 2:32 says, “And it shall come to pass, that whosoever shall call on the name of the LORD shall be delivered ...”

3. That at the name of Jesus every knee should bow - This is a fulfilment of the prophecy of Isaiah 45:23: “I have sworn by myself, the word is gone out of my mouth in righteousness, and shall not return, That unto me every knee shall bow, every tongue shall swear.” Bowing down on our knees before an earthly sovereign is an act of recognition that he is supreme and greater than we are. When we bow our

knees to the Lord in prayer, it is an act of fidelity to our Lord, who is the Sovereign of the universe. He is the King of Kings and the Lord of Lords.

4. Things in heaven - All heaven gives glory unto Christ the Lamb of God. We read in Revelation 5:13: "And every creature which is in heaven, and on the earth, and under the earth, and such as are in the sea, and all that are in them, heard I saying, Blessing, and honour, and glory, and power, be unto him that sitteth upon the throne, and unto the Lamb for ever and ever." Also, 1 Peter 3:22 says that Christ "is gone into heaven, and is on the right hand of God; angels and authorities and powers being made subject unto him."

5. Things in earth - Apart from the aforementioned verse in Revelation 5:13, we are told in Scripture that when the Lord returns, the Antichrist (who represents the empires of this world) will be obliged to bow his knee in defeat before the Lamb of God. Quoting Psalm 8:6, Paul says of Christ in Hebrews 2:8: "Thou hast put all things in subjection under His feet."

6. Things under the earth - When the Lord descended into the earth to preach to those who were sometimes disobedient in the days of Noah (1 Pet. 3:18-21), He released all the Old Testament saints, and they ascended with Him to heaven (Eph. 4:8). Many who have seen hell in visions have testified of the awesome fear and respect that demons have for Christ. The Apostle James said in chapter 2:19 of his epistle, "Even the demons believe; and tremble!" (NKJV).

This same fact is recorded in Scriptures prior to the Lord's ascension, for the demons recognized Him as the Son of God and trembled before Him, being obedient to His word (cf. Mt. 8:29).

7. That every tongue should confess that Jesus is Lord, to the glory of God the Father - This again is a quotation from Isaiah 45:23-24, where Scripture states that every tongue shall swear that in the Lord alone is righteousness. All will have to declare that God has wrought righteous judgment through the life of the Lord Jesus Christ, who alone is worthy of our praise and who alone is righteous.

CHAPTER 3

The Working Out of Our Salvation

2:12-18

In this brief section, Paul develops the truth that although salvation is the Lord's free gift to us, there is a part that we must play in bringing our salvation to perfection and completion. *We* must work out our own salvation with fear and trembling; we must do it, through the enabling power of God's grace.

1. OUR PART (2:12)

2:12 - *“Wherefore, my beloved, as ye have always obeyed, not as in my presence only, but now much more in my absence, work out your own salvation with fear and trembling.”* Paul commends the Philippians that they have always walked in obedience, not only while he was there, but also while he was not there. This is so important that we do what is right not only when people are watching or when we have a godly influence, but that we do what is right at all times.

King Joash of Judah walked in the ways of the Lord while Jehoiada the priest was living, because Jehoiada had a godly influence upon him. When Jehoiada died, however, Joash turned to idolatry and no longer walked in the ways of God

(2 Chr. 24:2,15-22). Paul commends the Philippians, therefore, for their steadfast obedience.

The Greek word translated “working out” is *katergazesthai*, and could be translated *finish* or *do not leave half completed*. This word basically has two connotations.

First of all, it has the thought of solving or working out a mathematical problem. Secondly, it speaks of coming to completion. Therefore, the Apostle Paul is exhorting the Philippian believers to solve the existing problems in their lives, and to continue on until their salvation experience is complete. Therefore, we want to press on to have a full and complete work of salvation done in our lives.

It is a maxim of the Christian life that virtually all spiritual experiences, virtues, and blessings of God are both instantaneous and progressive. We receive them instantaneously, but they then must progress and develop. There is always an initial experience, but then there is a continual unfolding and broadening of that experience.

This is true of water baptism. We are baptized in water, but then we begin to walk in newness of life. We are instantaneously baptized in the Holy Ghost with the initial evidence of speaking in tongues. But there is also a progressive experience of the Holy Ghost.

Paul brings this out in his epistle to the Ephesians when he says, “But be [being - *present tense*] filled with the Spirit”

(Eph. 5:18). The Greek word for baptism means *to fully immerse*; and the Lord wants to fill every area of our lives with His blessed Holy Spirit so that we manifest the nine fruits and gifts of the Spirit.

This is true of our salvation experience. We were instantly saved and translated from the kingdom of darkness into the kingdom of light. However, afterwards we experience the progressive outworking of our salvation as we are changed into the likeness of Christ. Little by little, as with the children of Israel, the Lord deals with the enemies and sins that still remain in our lives (see Deut. 7:22).

What is our responsibility in God's great plan of salvation for us? Basically, it is to walk in complete obedience to His holy Word and to obey every word that proceeds out of His mouth (Mt. 4:4). As seen in Paul's exhortation to the saints in Philippi (v.12), *complete obedience* to the Lord is our part in finishing the work of grace He has begun in us.

2. GOD'S PART (2:13)

2:13 - "*For it is God which worketh in you both to will and to do of his good pleasure.*" By His Holy Spirit, the Lord works upon the garden of our heart to bring the fruit of the Spirit to maturity in our lives. To accomplish this, the Lord removes all the weeds (which speak of the works of the flesh), and the stones (which speak of areas of rebellion in our lives) from the garden of our hearts.

Many times God requires things of us that are very difficult. When I was a young man preparing to go to Bible school, the Lord spoke to me that I had to do something before I could go to Bible school. He told me I had to rake and clean out my father's garden, which had been covered with bricks and debris from World War II. Many houses on our street were totally destroyed during the war. It was very hard work, but the Lord made me willing to do it with a good attitude and a rejoicing spirit. He even sent an angel to strengthen me and help me finish the job. After I obeyed the Lord and finished the garden, which my father so dearly loved, the Lord released me to go to Bible school to prepare for the ministry.

When the Lord requires us to do things that are very difficult, we should pray, "Lord, make me willing to do Your will," for it is He who works in us to make us *willing* and *able* to do His will.

Perhaps to understand this aspect of grace in our lives, I would like to recount a personal experience. For us to fulfil the Lord's purpose for our lives, possessions and our loved ones all must be placed upon the altar of God. In England, when I was growing up, single people were taught that they should save at least twenty-five percent of their income. This I sought to do. However, after I was saved I had an extraordinary experience. While walking along a London suburban street one day, I saw the angel of the Second Coming of the Lord, magnificent in power and glory, leaving heaven's portals and coming down toward me.

When he was only above the roof tops of the houses across the street, this mighty angel stopped, and his hand touched my bank, which was at the corner of the street. Without him speaking, the Holy Spirit made it very clear to me that there would be no Second Coming rapture for me as long as my confidence resided in my bank account. This experience made me very willing to relinquish and dissolve my bank balance into the Lord's work. Praise the Lord! It is He who makes us willing to do His good pleasure.

3. RIGHT ATTITUDES IN TRIALS (2:14-16)

2:14 - "*Do all things without murmurings [or complaining] and disputings.*" The Lord is the Master Potter, and as the Master Potter He must exert extraordinary pressure upon us (the clay) to mould us into the vessels of His choice. Thus it follows that we must not resist these situations that cause us inconveniences or even sufferings.

When we complain, we limit what the Lord can do in our lives, for complaining causes the Lord to cease His work in that area of our lives. The consequence is that we are never made into a vessel of honour for the Lord; instead we become vessels of lesser value in His heavenly kingdom. We could end up being among the *least* in the kingdom of heaven (Mt. 5:19).

The children of Israel continually murmured against the Lord in their wilderness journey. As a result, that generation never

made it into the Promised Land. They never experienced the full outworking of their salvation from Egypt (see Ex. 16:2-8; Num. 14:27-28). When we complain, in actuality, our complaints are directed against the Lord, and we are finding fault with His all-wise plan for our lives.

David prayed in Psalm 144:14-15: “That our oxen may be strong to labour; that there be no breaking in, nor going out; that there be no complaining in our streets. Happy is that people, that is in such a case: yea, happy is that people, whose God is the LORD.” There is such happiness when there is no complaining. The ultimate goal in this life is now given by Paul in verse 15.

2:15 - *“That ye may be blameless and harmless, the sons of God, without rebuke, in the midst of a crooked and perverse nation, among whom ye shine as lights in the world.”* We should be even as Christ Himself said in Matthew 10:16, “Behold, I send you forth as sheep in the midst of wolves: be ye therefore wise as serpents, and harmless as doves.” One of the names of Christ is the Light of the world. However, He said in Matthew 5:14, “Ye are the light of the world.”

We are called to be the light of the world. The light and love of Christ should shine forth through our lives. We are to be living testimonies of His grace in both word and deed, and there should be no darkness in us.

2:16 - *“Holding forth the word of life; that I may rejoice in the day of Christ, that I have not run in vain, neither laboured*

in vain.” We are living epistles that are read by men and women everywhere. We do not want to be a disappointment to those who have been our teachers and pastors over the years—our spiritual fathers and mothers in Christ. Paul earnestly prays that everything he has poured into the Philippian believers will not be wasted, but that they will succeed in their Christian walk, and bear much fruit for eternity.

When we complain, we limit what
God does in our lives because He
ceases work in that very area

4. THE ACCEPTABLE OFFERING (2:17-18)

2:17-18 - *“Yea, and if I be offered upon the sacrifice and service of your faith, I joy, and rejoice with you all. For the same cause also do ye joy, and rejoice with me.”* The New King James Version reads: “Yes, and if I am being poured out as a drink offering on the sacrifice and service of your faith, I am glad and rejoice with you all. For the same reason you also be glad and rejoice with me.”

Paul viewed his life as a drink offering which was being poured out upon the sacrifice and service of the faith of the Philippian saints. Paul and the Philippian believers were offering mutual service unto the Lord that was well-pleasing in His sight. Paul

rejoiced to see his spiritual children spending their lives in the service of God.

One of the facts of our spiritual life is that we will be required to give an account to the Lord for not only our natural children, but also our spiritual children in the faith. As natural children give us joy when they are obedient, so do our spiritual children when they excel in the Gospel of Christ and the ministry to which the Lord has appointed them. Paul writes in 1 Thessalonians 2:19-20: “For what is our hope, or joy, or crown of rejoicing? Are not even ye in the presence of our Lord Jesus Christ at his coming? For ye are our glory and joy.” Our crown in heaven is our spiritual children—those whom we have led to the Lord and influenced for good.

In the Old Testament, every male was required to appear before the Lord three times a year—during the Feast of Passover, the Feast of Pentecost, and the Feast of Tabernacles (Deut. 16:16). However, they could not appear before the Lord empty-handed. They had to bring the fruits of the harvests of these three feasts.

Spiritually, we cannot appear before the Lord without any fruit. These three feasts speak of spiritual experiences. Passover, of course, is a type of salvation. Pentecost is a type of the baptism of the Holy Spirit. The Feast of Tabernacles speaks of spiritual maturity, for it was the time when the crops came to full maturity. We must offer to the Lord the lives of those whom we have led to the Lord, prayed for to receive the baptism of the Holy Spirit with the initial

evidence of speaking in other tongues, and led to Christian maturity (Eph. 4:13).

Children are the crown and joy of natural parents (Prov. 17:6), and it is the same with spiritual children. Therefore, I encourage you to go and make disciples of the whole earth, as Jesus exhorted us to in Matthew 28:19-20: “Therefore go and make disciples of all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit, and teaching them to obey everything I have commanded you. And surely I am with you always, to the very end of the age” (NIV). May God grant that we produce spiritual children, like the Apostle Paul, who walk in the ways of the Lord and give their lives for the extension of the Gospel.

CHAPTER 4

Timothy, the Spiritual Son

2:19-24

Now Paul speaks of Timothy—his spiritual son who gave him so much pleasure. In Philippians 2:19-24 Paul expresses his desire to send Timothy to the Philippian church to see how they were doing. Before we consider this passage, however, let us briefly review Timothy's background.

Timothy was a native of Lystra, a small Roman colony in the province of Galatia not far from Tarsus, Paul's birthplace. Timothy had a godly heritage. His father was Greek (Acts 16:1), but his mother Eunice was a Christian Jewess. His grandmother (Eunice's mother) was also a believing Jewess.

Paul apparently knew both of them and commended them for their faith which they had passed on to Timothy (2 Tim. 1:5). From an early age, Timothy was instructed in the Holy Scriptures (2 Tim. 3:15). Paul visited Lystra on his first missionary journey (Acts 14:6-22). It was probably at this time that Paul met Timothy and his family.

When Paul passed through Lystra on his second missionary journey, Paul chose the young Timothy to be his travelling companion (Acts 16:1-3). Timothy is called a disciple. Even

at a young age, Timothy was deeply committed to the Lord. He had a good report of all the brethren in the church there and was well-respected by all. He had a good testimony before God and man.

Because Timothy's father was not a Jew, Paul had Timothy circumcised so that he would be well-accepted by the Jewish brethren. Although the Jerusalem council had declared that physical circumcision was not necessary, Paul thought it was wise in this case to give Timothy broad acceptance among the Jews. However, in the case of Titus, who was a Gentile, Paul did not have him circumcised because it was not necessary (Gal. 2:3).

From this time onward, Timothy became Paul's companion on many of his trips and also his closest friend and confidant. Timothy was with Paul when he went to Berea. When Paul fled Berea to Athens because of persecution, he left Timothy and Silas behind at Berea (Acts 17:13-15). They later joined Paul at Athens (Acts 18:5). Paul then sent Timothy on a mission to Thessalonica (1 Th. 3:1-3). Later, after Paul had spent over two years in Ephesus and was leaving Ephesus for Jerusalem, he sent Timothy along with Erastus to Macedonia (Acts 19:22). Timothy was there when an offering was being taken to the church at Jerusalem (Acts 20:4). He was with Paul in Corinth when Paul wrote his epistle to the Romans (Rom. 16:21).

Timothy was Paul's most trusted and faithful friend and co-worker. Often when Paul had a very important task which

he himself could not do, he sent Timothy in his place because he knew he could trust him. Timothy exemplifies the words of Proverbs 25:13: “As the cold of snow in the time of harvest, so is a faithful messenger to them that send him: for he refresheth the soul of his masters.” Paul said in 1 Corinthians 4:17 that Timothy was faithful in the Lord.

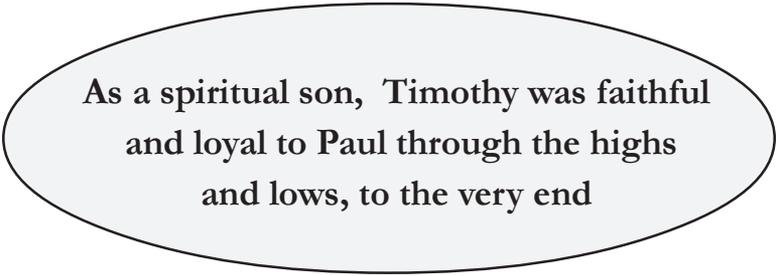
Timothy was a faithful messenger who did exactly what Paul asked him to do, and he refreshed the heart of Paul. Whenever Paul sent him on a mission, Timothy did not have any personal agendas; he only had one thing in mind—to be faithful to do what Paul had asked him to do.

When there were problems in the Corinthian church that required a stern rebuke, Paul sent Timothy (1 Cor. 4:17). There was immorality in the church that Paul had to deal with, and Paul knew that this was a very delicate situation that could have easily exploded. Yet he had confidence in Timothy that he would handle it properly. Paul also sent Timothy to the church at Thessalonica to comfort them (1 Th. 3:2).

Timothy was with Paul in prison at Rome when Paul wrote to the Philippians (Phil. 1:1), and Paul writes in his epistle that he is planning to send Timothy to Philippi as his emissary. When Paul wrote his first epistle to Timothy, Timothy was at that time in charge of the work at Ephesus. Paul had left him there to be the pastor of the churches (1 Tim. 1:1-3). Timothy, therefore, had a very important and fruitful ministry in the Early Church.

Timothy was a servant of the Lord (Phil. 1:1), a minister of God, and a fellowlabourer in the Gospel with Paul (1 Th. 3:2). Paul called him his dearly beloved son in the faith (1 Tim. 1:2; 2 Tim. 1:2; 1 Cor. 4:17).

Timothy is the model of a spiritual son. His life shows us how a person should treat his spiritual father. Timothy served Paul and was always faithful to him, even to the end. When Paul wrote Timothy just before his execution in Rome, he asked Timothy to come to him. Everyone had forsaken him except Luke (2 Tim. 4:9-11). Timothy was loyal to the end. He was faithful to Paul through the highs and the lows, the good and the bad. He was with Paul when Paul was experiencing great popularity and great fruitfulness in preaching, as well as when Paul was in prison—a time when it was a reproach to be associated with Paul.



**As a spiritual son, Timothy was faithful
and loyal to Paul through the highs
and lows, to the very end**

One of the greatest keys to receiving promises from the Lord and a ministry of our own is to be faithful in another man's work. Christ said in Luke 16:12, "And if ye have not been faithful in that which is another man's, who shall give you that which is your own?" Because Timothy was faithful to Paul, the Lord gave him a very fruitful ministry of his own.

With this background of Timothy in mind, let us now consider Paul's three-fold commendation of Timothy in this passage. Paul says that:

- 1) Timothy was like-minded (i.e. as his spiritual father)
- 2) Timothy would genuinely care for the Philippians
- 3) Timothy had proven himself

2:19-20 - *“But I trust in the Lord Jesus to send Timotheus shortly unto you, that I also may be of good comfort, when I know your state. For I have no man likeminded, who will naturally care for your state.”* Paul wanted to send Timothy to the church at Philippi so that he could come back and give Paul a report of how they were doing. Paul had great confidence in sending Timothy to Philippi because he was *like-minded*.

1. Timothy was like-minded

What a high commendation Timothy is given by the Apostle Paul. In other words, Timothy had the same heart and mind on matters as Paul did. Timothy had a kindred spirit. Paul knew Timothy would handle things just as he would. Paul reproduced himself in Timothy, for he had the same spirit and vision as Paul.

So many people, and especially ministers, have self-seeking interests, rather than seeking to do God's will. They are seeking to promote themselves as Adonijah did (1 Ki. 1:5). Having been in the ministry for over 40 years, I have seen so many

people disqualify themselves from the ministry and from their inheritance because they are seeking their own interests. May we have one desire in life and only one—to do the will of God and not our own.

2. Timothy would genuinely care for them

The *New King James Version* of verse twenty reads: “For I have no one like-minded, who will sincerely care for your state.” And the *New American Standard Bible* says, “For I have no one else of kindred spirit who will genuinely be concerned for your welfare.” Timothy had a true shepherd’s heart. He would genuinely be concerned for their welfare and take care of them.

In John 10:12-15, Jesus warned of men whose hearts were not consecrated to God or His people: “But he that is an hireling, and not the shepherd, whose own the sheep are not, seeth the wolf coming, and leaveth the sheep, and fleeth: and the wolf catcheth them, and scattereth the sheep. The hireling fleeth, because he is an hireling, and careth not for the sheep. I am the good shepherd, and know my sheep, and am known of mine. As the Father knoweth me, even so know I the Father: and I lay down my life for the sheep.”

Those who work solely for compensation, which is what a hireling (or hired hand) does, have no genuine interest in the sheep. If wolves came out to attack the sheep, he would flee to protect himself rather than risk his life for the sheep. However, a true shepherd cares for his sheep and would give

his life for them. Jesus is the Good Shepherd, and He gave His life for us. Timothy had the heart of Christ for the Philippians.

In the Church today, there are many *hirelings* who are not true shepherds or pastors. The Lord spoke through Jeremiah in chapter 23:1-2 of his prophecies: “ ‘Woe to the shepherds who destroy and scatter the sheep of My pasture!’ says the LORD. Therefore thus says the LORD God of Israel against the shepherds who feed My people: ‘You have scattered My flock, driven them away, and not attended to them. Behold, I will attend to you for the evil of your doings,’ says the LORD” (NKJV). The leaders of Israel, who should have cared for the people, instead scattered them and did not care for them.

The Lord spoke similar words to Ezekiel, saying: “Son of man, prophesy against the shepherds of Israel, prophesy, and say unto them, Thus saith the Lord GOD unto the shepherds; Woe be to the shepherds of Israel that do feed themselves! should not the shepherds feed the flocks? Ye eat the fat, and ye clothe you with the wool, ye kill them that are fed: but ye feed not the flock. The diseased have ye not strengthened, neither have ye healed that which was sick, neither have ye bound up that which was broken, neither have ye brought again that which was driven away, neither have ye sought that which was lost; but with force and with cruelty have ye ruled them. And they were scattered, because there is no shepherd: and they became meat to all the beasts of the field, when they were scattered” (Ezek. 34:1-5).

The leaders of Israel did not feed the people of God. Their motives for being in the ministry were self-seeking. They only sought to improve their lives, and increase their riches and comforts. Many ministers follow the easy path. They seek their own interests instead of seeking to care for God's people. Timothy, however, was not like this. Paul knew he had the heart of a true shepherd. That is why Paul later sent him to Ephesus to be the pastor of the churches there.

2:21-22 - *“For all seek their own [interests], not the things which are Jesus Christ’s. But ye know the proof of him, that, as a son with the father, he hath served with me in the gospel.”*

We should pray that the Lord gives us spiritual sons like Timothy who will be loyal and faithful to us. I thank God that I have many spiritual sons and grandsons who give me so much pleasure. They are true *Timothys*—wholeheartedly serving the Lord with joy and rejoicing in service of the Gospel. It is a joy to send my spiritual children in my stead on mission trips when I am unable to go myself. I know they will be faithful ambassadors of the Gospel.

3. Timothy had proven himself

The *New King James Version* of verse twenty-two reads: “But you know his proven character...” And the *New International Version* says, “But you know that Timothy has proved himself...” The Greek word *dokime* for “proof” refers to something which has been tested and been approved. Timothy had been faithful to Paul and had proven himself. Although

Timothy was a young man, because he proved his faithfulness, he was used mightily of God.

Paul speaks in 1 Timothy chapter 3 of the qualifications for elders. He said that elders should not be *novices*, which means new converts (1 Tim. 3:6). Before a person can be entrusted with a leadership position, they must first prove themselves. Timothy was such a man.

Before Paul asked him to join him on his second missionary journey, Timothy had proven himself faithful in the local church at Lystra. He had the commendation and respect of all the brethren there. Then Timothy proved himself faithful in everything Paul asked him to do. Little by little, Timothy qualified himself by his faithfulness for greater opportunities of ministry.

2:23-24 - *“Him therefore I hope to send presently, so soon as I shall see how it will go with me. But I trust in the Lord that I also myself shall come shortly.”* At this time Paul was unable to go to Philippi, but he hoped he could in the future. Although at times circumstances dictate that we must send others in our place to the mission field, there is such a longing in our hearts to visit our loved ones in foreign lands ourselves. Paul felt a strong desire to see his beloved friends in Philippi.

These three qualities for which Paul commended Timothy are the same qualities the Lord’s looks for in a person’s life before promoting them in the ministry. Therefore, if you have the call of God upon your life to any avenue of ministry

or service to Him, you should study the life of Timothy and ask God to work out these same qualities in your heart. Even if you are not called to full-time ministry, the life of Timothy should serve as a model for your personal life.

CHAPTER 5

Epaphroditus—the Patient, Suffering Servant

2:25-30

Epaphroditus shines forth from the pages of Holy Scripture as a selfless servant who willingly would have died for the sake of the Apostle Paul. Epaphroditus personifies the words of the Lord Jesus in John 15:13: “Greater love hath no man than this, that a man lay down his life for his friends.”

Paul now writes of this beloved servant of the Lord, Epaphroditus, who was a member of the church at Philippi. He had brought a gift to Paul from the Philippian church. While he was in Rome ministering to Paul, Epaphroditus became very sick and nearly died.

The Apostle Paul sent him back to Philippi after he had fully recovered, and sent this commendation of him in verses 25-30 to the Philippians, enjoining them to honour him and receive him back warmly.

2:25 - *“Yet I supposed it necessary to send to you Epaphroditus, my brother, and companion in labour, and fellowsoldier, but your messenger, and he that ministered to my wants.”* The Apostle Paul uses four words to describe

Epaphroditus: *brother, companion in labor, fellowsoldier, and messenger.*

Paul describes Epaphroditus as a *messenger*. Paul used the Greek word *apostolos*, which is also translated “apostle.” By this designation, Paul was ranking him among the apostles of the New Testament church. Paul also said that he “ministered” to his needs, using the Greek word *leitourgos*, which was a rank of distinction accorded to those who were principal benefactors of their cities or nations. Thus Epaphroditus was a man of inestimable rank in the kingdom of God.

2:26-27 - “*For he longed after you all, and was full of heaviness, because that ye had heard that he had been sick. For indeed he was sick nigh unto death: but God had mercy on him; and not on him only, but on me also, lest I should have sorrow upon sorrow.*” The beauty of the character of Epaphroditus shines forth from these verses as one who carried the burden of the ministry very close to heart. He took to heart the duties of caring for Paul, ministering by his side, and fighting spiritual battles. He was an involved Christian—a participant and not a spectator.

Therefore, as Paul states in Galatians 6:17, he bore in his body the marks of a servant of Jesus Christ. (Please see our book entitled *The Cross* with respect to the phrase, “I bear in my body the marks of the Lord Jesus.”)

2:28-29 - “*I sent him therefore the more carefully, that, when ye see him again, ye may rejoice, and that I may be the less*

sorrowful. Receive him therefore in the Lord with all gladness; and hold such in reputation:” This servant of God who had been sent by the church in Philippi as their emissary to the Apostle was now being honourably discharged by Paul.

He was to return to the Philippian church and be received with high esteem because he successfully fulfilled the work of the Lord. May we likewise see that in such phases of our lives we complete our tasks with honour for the glory of the Lord.

**Epaphroditus was an involved Christian,
a participant, not a spectator**

2:30 - *“Because for the work of Christ he was nigh unto death, not regarding his life, to supply your lack of service toward me.”* Therefore, after Paul decides to send him back from the plague-ridden city of Rome to Philippi, it is natural that he enjoins the Philippians to receive him with all due respect.

In part, it was because of his ministry in these conditions that he became seriously ill. The name Epaphroditus means “lovely,” and certainly this companion of Paul lived up to his name.

CHAPTER 6

The First Resurrection

3:1-15

Paul deems it necessary to warn his dear friends of certain perils that could endanger their spiritual life and the well-being of the church. He warns of false Christians who were teaching doctrines contrary to the Word of God.

The main theme of this section, however, is the first resurrection. This is the resurrection of all the righteous who have qualified to rule and reign with the Lord during His millennial reign upon earth. This is the high calling of God in Christ Jesus (3:14).

3:1 - *“Finally, my brethren, rejoice in the Lord. To write the same things to you, to me indeed is not grievous, but for you it is safe.”* Before addressing their problems, Paul encourages them to rejoice. Paul’s rejoicing spirit in the midst of such horrendous personal trials and hardships must have been a great source of comfort for these dear believers.

It reminds me of a well-known story in the last century of a ship that was in a terrible storm. The passengers were ordered not to come out on the deck. However, one intrepid soul clambered out, making his way with much difficulty onto the wave-drenched deck and then to the pilothouse where the deck

officer was strapped to the wheel itself. When the deck officer saw him, he just smiled.

The passenger then made his way back below decks where he assured all his fellow travelers that all was well because the deck officer was smiling. In much the same way, the buoyant spirit of the Apostle Paul caused his dear friends to take fresh hope in their battles with the enemy.

3:2 - "*Beware of dogs, beware of evil workers, beware of the concision.*" Paul now warns them to beware of three kinds of people: dogs, evil workers, and those of the concision. Throughout Scripture the term *dogs* is used of the lowest form of humanity. It is used prophetically of those who attacked Christ upon the cross (Ps. 22:16,20).

In the Law, the price of a dog and a whore are comparable; and neither could be offered to the Lord. Deuteronomy 23:18 says, "Thou shalt not bring the hire of a whore, or the price of a dog, into the house of the LORD thy God for any vow: for even both these are abomination unto the LORD thy God." In Revelation 22:15 dogs are likened to the most shamelessly unclean of humanity: "For without are dogs, and sorcerers, and whore-mongers, and murderers, and idolaters, and whosoever loveth and maketh a lie." Dogs in Scripture are symbolic of homosexuals and people with sexual uncleanness.

Evil workers are those who because of their wicked hearts sow heresies, envy, jealousy, and discord in the congregations

of God. “It is necessary that offences come,” said the Lord, “but woe unto them by whom they come” (Mt.18:7). The *circumcision* were Jewish zealots who insisted on the keeping of the ceremonial law, which has been done away in Christ, in all its forms. These Jews were seeking to force the non-Jewish Christians to become circumcised according to the law of Moses.

In other words, they wanted to bring them back again under the bondage of the ceremonial law. In New Testament times, this was perhaps one of the most difficult obstacles that the early Christians faced. Even the Apostle Peter was caught up in their dissimulations (Gal. 2:12-19).

3:3 - *“For we are the circumcision, which worship God in the spirit, and rejoice in Christ Jesus, and have no confidence in the flesh.”* True circumcision is now explained by the apostle. Paul developed this truth in his epistle to the Romans: “For he is not a Jew, which is one outwardly; neither is that circumcision, which is outward in the flesh: But he is a Jew, which is one inwardly; and circumcision is that of the heart, in the spirit, and not in the letter; whose praise is not of men, but of God” (Rom. 2:28-29).

True circumcision is not physical circumcision which the Jews practiced. This was given by God to point to inward circumcision of the heart. Spiritual circumcision is the cutting away of the sinful traits and nature we were born with. It is replacing our hard, rebellious heart with a heart of flesh that responds to the Lord and worships Him.

Those who have circumcised hearts worship the Lord in the Spirit and in truth (Deut. 10:16; 30:6), as Christ said to the woman at the well in John 4:23: “But the hour cometh, and now is, when the true worshippers shall worship the Father in spirit and in truth: for the Father seeketh such to worship him.” Also, we must have a rejoicing spirit, which is a manifestation of the fruit of the Holy Spirit. Another sign of a circumcised heart is that we have no confidence in the flesh (all pride is dealt with), and we rely completely upon the Lord.

True Righteousness

There are basically two forms of righteousness:

1. *Our own righteousness*, which comes from seeking to be righteous by the works of the law, is roundly condemned in the Scriptures. It leads to *self-righteousness*. As Isaiah 64:6 tells us, all of our righteousness is as filthy rags, meaning those used by a menstrous woman which are an abomination even in the sight of men, let alone in the sight of a holy God. The point is that our righteousness is not accepted by the Lord. Only the righteousness that comes by faith in the shed blood of Jesus Christ is accepted by God.

2. *The righteousness of Christ*, which is received by the faith of God.

These two aspects of righteousness are now addressed by Paul. To have the true righteousness that comes alone from God, we must repudiate our own righteousness.

3:4 - *“Though I might also have confidence in the flesh. If any other man thinketh that he hath whereof he might trust in the flesh, I more:”* Now the apostle seeks to show his friends that if ever there was one who could trust in his own righteousness, it certainly was Paul.

3:5 - *“Circumcised the eighth day, of the stock of Israel, of the tribe of Benjamin, an Hebrew of the Hebrews; as touching the law, a Pharisee;”* The Pharisees were a class of Jews who sought to keep every jot and tittle of the law. They were scrupulous in every detail of the law of Moses, but had added a lot of additional rules and regulations that the Lord condemned. These traditions of men held people in bondage to the letter of the law, hindering them from fulfilling the spirit of the law—which is mercy and justice (Mt. 23:23).

This is clearly seen in the life of Saul of Tarsus, who was one of the most ardent persecutors of Christians before his conversion on the road to Damascus. He did not show forth the fruits of love, mercy, and compassion in his dealings with the saints. But when the grace of God apprehended his life, he began to major on these important issues of life.

3:6 - *“Concerning zeal, persecuting the church; touching the righteousness which is in the law, blameless.”* Nonetheless, according to the letter of the law he was without fault; albeit he had to recognize later in life that he was the chief of sinners because he had blasphemed the name of Jesus, the Son of God (1 Tim. 1:13-15).

3:7 - *“But what things were gain to me, those I counted loss for Christ.”* Paul realized that all his righteousness according to the law would not benefit him. Instead, it was an obstacle that caused him to oppose the gospel message of salvation by faith in Christ Jesus.

3:8 - *“Yea doubtless, and I count all things but loss for the excellency of the knowledge of Christ Jesus my Lord: for whom I have suffered the loss of all things, and do count them but dung, that I may win Christ.”* Like Paul, our own good works, however meritorious they may appear in the sight of man, cannot save us or bring us to the knowledge of Christ, in whom alone is salvation and true righteousness.

3:9 - *“And be found in him, not having mine own righteousness, which is of the law, but that which is through the faith of Christ, the righteousness which is of God by faith.”* It is by being in Christ and having Him in us that we receive the gift of God’s righteousness by faith. Habakkuk 2:4, “The just shall live by His faith [that is, the faith of the Son of God].”

Qualifications for the First Resurrection (3:10-11)

3:10-11 - *“That I may know him, and the power of his resurrection, and the fellowship of his sufferings, being made conformable unto his death; If by any means I might attain unto the resurrection of the dead.”* Here we see the deepest heart cry of the Apostle Paul. With all that was in him, he wanted to qualify for the first resurrection spoken of in

Revelation 20:6: “Blessed and holy is he that hath part in the first resurrection: on such the second death hath no power, but they shall be priests of God and of Christ, and shall reign with him a thousand years.” There are two specific resurrections of the saints: the first resurrection, which takes place at the Second Coming of Christ, and the general resurrection, which takes place after the 1,000 year reign of Christ upon earth.

**There are two specific
resurrections
of the saints. We want to qualify
for the *first* resurrection to
rule and reign with Christ**

Not all Christians will have part in the first resurrection. This is only for the overcoming saints who will be resurrected and receive their glorified bodies to live and reign with the Lord during His 1,000 year reign upon earth. This is made very clear in the Word of God. The Apostle Paul said in Philippians 3:10-11: “That I may know him, and the power of his resurrection, and the fellowship of his sufferings, being made conformable unto his death; If by any means I might attain unto the resurrection of the dead.” The Apostle Paul’s desire and goal was to qualify for (attain unto) the first resurrection spoken of in Revelation 20:6.

This word “resurrection” Paul uses in Philippians 3:11 is a compound word in the Greek which is used only here. It

means *the out-resurrection from among the dead*. This implies that only some of the dead are raised at this time, not all of them. Paul wanted to be in this special, select group of “called out ones from among the dead.” Obviously, if it could be automatically assumed that one will be resurrected at this time just because one is a believer, Paul would never have sought to qualify to be in this group.

Thus only a select group of believers who are holy will be resurrected at the time of the Second Coming. They will receive their glorified bodies and rule and reign with Christ during His millennial reign. They will be kings and priests who teach the Lord’s statutes to the nations. The rest of the saved and unsaved will not be resurrected until after the Lord’s 1,000 year reign, when all will appear before the Lord to give an account of their lives (Rev. 20:12-15).

In Philippians 3:10, Paul gives us four qualifications that must be worked out in our lives in order for us to have a part in the first resurrection:

1. *That I may know Him*
2. *That I may know the power of His resurrection*
3. *That I may know the fellowship of His sufferings*
4. *Being made conformable to His death*

We will now look at these four qualifications for the first resurrection in some detail. Because this portion is the main theme of the Philippian epistle, we will cover it in greater detail than the other themes of the book.

1. THAT I MAY KNOW HIM

Paul's ever increasing desire in life was to know Christ more and more. He cried out, "That I may know Him." This was written six years before his death. The Apostle Paul was a man who had already met Christ on the road to Damascus nearly thirty years before. He had seen the Lord many times, and had even visited the third heaven, and yet his cry was, "I want to know Christ in a more intimate way!" You see, we must never plateau in our Christian walk. We must ever have a progressive, ongoing vision and desire to know Christ more every day and to behold Him in all of His beauty.

The Greek word Paul uses for "know" is *ginosko*, which means "a personal knowledge." This comes through the closest and most intimate relationship possible. As you know in life, it is when you live with a person (like your husband or wife) that you really get to know him, and what he likes and what he doesn't like. Well, that was Paul's desire. He wanted to know the Lord in such an intimate way that he knew how to please Him. This should be our goal in life too.

To know the Lord really means to know what He is like—to know Him by His character. Well, what is Christ like? In Exodus 34:6 the Lord revealed Himself to Moses through five attributes of His character. "And the Lord passed by before him, and proclaimed, The Lord, The Lord God, merciful and gracious, longsuffering, and abundant in goodness and truth" (Ex. 34:6). Then in the New Testament

in Matthew 11:29, Christ used two other words to describe Himself: “I am meek and lowly in heart.”

Christ wants to be known by these seven attributes. Let’s now look at these seven attributes of Christ to get an idea of what He is like so that we may know Him in this way. It is so important to study these aspects of the character of Christ because it is as these same qualities are worked out in our lives by the grace of God that we can come to know Christ intimately.

Seven Attributes of Christ

1. Merciful
2. Gracious
3. Longsuffering
4. Abundant in Goodness
5. Abundant in Truth
6. Meek
7. Lowly

1. Merciful. The Hebrew word *rachuw*m for “merciful” means *full of compassion*. Christ said, “I desire mercy and not sacrifice” (Mt. 12:7 - NKJV). Mercy is the highest attribute of God, for it is above His law. In the Tabernacle of Moses, the Mercy Seat (a thin sheet of gold) covered the Ark of the Covenant, which contained the two tables of stone upon which the law was written. Even when a person has broken the law,

it is God's prerogative to show mercy. Christ's desire is that none should perish (2 Pet. 3:9).

A beautiful example of God's merciful nature is found in Hosea 11:8-9. After speaking of all the sins of the backsliding tribe of Ephraim, the Lord gives the reason why He is not going to destroy Ephraim, but show them mercy. He says, "For I am God and not man." Christ is the merciful high priest, and He wants us to be merciful. He said, "Blessed are the merciful: for they shall obtain mercy."

2. Gracious. The word *gracious* means "to bend or stoop in kindness to an inferior." Graciousness is a warmheartedness that flows out to those in need. A gracious person not only sees and hears the needs of others, but does something to help them. The gracious nature of the Lord can be seen in His treatment of King David. David said in Psalm 40:1-2: "[The Lord] inclined unto me, and heard my cry. He brought me up also out of an horrible pit." The Lord heard David's cry and lifted him up out of the pit of adultery. We should be gracious in our actions and words to others. All of Israel marvelled at the gracious words that came forth from the lips of Jesus (Lk. 4:22). May we be gracious as our wonderful Lord.

3. Longsuffering. The literal Hebrew meaning of *longsuffering* is "one who has a long nose." The reason why the derivation of longsuffering comes from this meaning is because in the Hebrew culture a person with a short nose was looked upon as someone who would breathe very rapidly,

being a person of passion who could become angry very quickly. However, in their minds a person with a long nose would breathe in measured steps, and thus would not be quick to become angry. This is the word the Lord used to describe Himself.

He is *slow* to anger. He is very patient and waits for a long time for His people to change. He waited for a hundred and twenty years in the days of Noah for people to change from their wicked ways so that He would not have to judge them (1 Pet. 3:20). Isaiah 30:18 says, “And therefore will the Lord wait, that he may be gracious unto you.” The Lord does not desire to judge us, so He suffers with us for a very long time, hoping that we will change so that He can be gracious unto us.

God endured the wickedness of King Manasseh because He knew one day he would respond to His grace and change (2 Chr. 33). The Lord wants to develop this same virtue in our lives. Paul’s life of suffering was not in vain; his life is held up to all generations as a pattern of longsuffering (1 Tim 1:16).

4. Abundant in Goodness. The Hebrew word “cheched” for *goodness* means “lovingkindness.” Goodness can be seen in a practical illustration of lovingkindness toward men whose only claim is their misfortune, such as Job in his hour of need. He said in Job 6:14, “To him that is afflicted pity should be showed from his friend.” The same Hebrew word for goodness is here translated pity. We want

to open our hands wide to do good to others (Deut. 15:8). Goodness also means *to be incapable of doing evil to others*. Many years ago, the Lord appeared to me and said, “Touch me, I am altogether good.” We want to have the goodness of the Lord worked out in our lives.

5. Abundant in Truth. Christ is also abundant in truth. I would like to consider two aspects of truth. First of all, in the Hebrew *truth* means “steadfastness, faithfulness, and reliability.” The Lord declared in John 17:17, “Thy word is truth.” What God says, He will do. When God speaks to us and says He will do something, we can absolutely count on it because He is the essence and embodiment of truth, and He is utterly reliable, as are His words. A second aspect of truth can be seen in the Lord’s own words in John 14:6: “I am the way, the *truth*, and the life.” He is truth, and truth is light. There is a liberating power in truth that dispels all darkness (Jn. 8:32).

6. Meek. Meekness describes Christ more adequately probably than any other single word. When John introduced Jesus to Israel, he said, “Behold, the Lamb of God” (Jn. 1:29,36).

A lamb has a very meek nature. It does not complain when it is sheared of all that it has (its wool); it just quietly submits to its shearers. Isaiah 53:7 says of Christ, “He was oppressed, and he was afflicted, yet he opened not his mouth: he is brought as a lamb to the slaughter, and as a sheep before her shearers is dumb, so he openeth not his mouth.” When Christ was

reviled, He reviled not again (1 Pet. 2:23). Meekness is the quality of spirit that accepts the dealings of God in our lives as working together for our good, without resisting or disputing. Meekness could also be described as “the servant spirit.”

7. Lowly. This quality of Christ is often linked with meekness. Zechariah prophesied of Christ, “Behold, thy King cometh unto thee ... lowly, and riding upon an ass” (9:9). When Christ made His triumphal entry into Jerusalem the week of His death upon the cross, He came as the lowly servant riding upon an ass, not as the conquering King riding upon a regal, white horse. Christ was lowly in heart.

True lowliness is exemplified by a servant who has no will or agenda of his own, but is under the orders of his master, seeking only to do his will. Jesus relinquished His throne-rights and became totally dependent upon His Father, saying in John 5:19, “I can do nothing of myself.”

To truly know Christ not only involves knowing Him as the King of Kings upon the throne of His glory, as the Captain of the Lord’s host, or as the great Healer. To really know His heart, we need a revelation of Him as the Servant of all who is clothed with the garments of meekness and lowliness. He said, “I am meek and lowly.”

The Lord says in Isaiah 57:15, “For thus saith the high and lofty One that inhabiteth eternity, whose name is Holy; I dwell in the high and holy place, with him also that is of a contrite

and humble spirit, to revive the spirit of the humble, and to revive the heart of the contrite ones.” Although Christ inhabits the throne of glory, He humbles Himself to be a servant to us and to dwell with the lowly. We must have His mercy, graciousness, longsuffering, goodness, truth, meekness, and lowliness worked out in our lives in order to really know Christ! May our perpetual desire and prayer be, “That I may know Him!” As we press on to know Him, we shall become like Him.

We must never plateau in our Christian walk. We must have an ongoing vision, and ever seek to know Christ more and more each day

2. THE POWER OF HIS RESURRECTION

The Apostle Paul wrote Philippians 3:10 under the inspiration of the Holy Spirit. Therefore, the order of the phrases is divine and with specific purpose. “That I may know Him” comes before “the power of His resurrection.” We must have an intimate personal relationship with Him and know Him, having His character worked out in our lives, in order to be clothed upon with and participate in the power of His resurrection.

When Paul introduced the thought of knowing the power of the resurrection of the Lord Jesus, he was careful in his choice

of the Greek word for “know.” The word he chose emphasizes that this knowledge is not an intellectual appreciation of that tremendous power. We have already noted that “to know Him” means to have a very intimate, personal relationship with Christ. To *know* the power of His resurrection means that we are an intimate partaker of that same power.

Preparation for the Power of His Resurrection

God prepares His vessels before He uses them. This is illustrated throughout Scripture, and today He is preparing us so that we can be vessels through which He can channel His tremendous power. Moses, the meekest man in the earth, was the one who beheld the likeness of the Lord. In Psalm 103:7 we find that Moses was the one who knew the ways of God, and who manifested the greatest power that any man ever manifested throughout the history of mankind.

In 2 Corinthians 3:7-8 the Apostle Paul uses Moses as a type of what God is going to do in the last days of the Church Age. If the glory demonstrated through Moses was extraordinary during the age of the Law, think of what it will be like in the New Testament Age and in our time. In our days the demonstration of the power of the Spirit of God will be even greater. Isaiah 60:2 says that in these last days the actual glory of God will be seen upon His people.

In Zechariah 4:14 there is an illustration of “the two anointed ones, who stand by the Lord of the whole earth.” This refers specifically to Moses and Elijah, but they also represent two

companies of God's people in the last days. Moses represents the ministry of the teacher, and Elijah represents the mighty ministry of the prophet.

The prophet Zechariah also saw "a candlestick of pure gold" (Zech. 4:2). From this golden candlestick, which had seven lamps, oil flowed forth. In the Old Testament the candlestick represented the Holy Spirit and the ministry of the Holy Spirit, while the seven lamps represented the seven spirits of God, the anointing upon the Lord Jesus Christ. There is a key principle embodied in the candlestick. In order to be prepared, it had to be tried in the fire and purified. Then it had to suffer blow after blow in the heat of the furnace of affliction so it could be formed and made into a vessel that was fit to have the oil (anointing) of God flow through it.

So, too, "the power of His resurrection" is only going to flow through those who pass through the first step of knowing Christ and have the attributes of the nature of Christ worked out in their lives.

The Greatness of the Power of His Resurrection

The Early Church saw great power released. Paul said that "Jesus Christ was declared to be the Son of God with power according to the Spirit of holiness, by the resurrection from the dead" (Rom. 1:4). In 1 Corinthians 2:4-5, the Apostle Paul said, "And my speech and my preaching was not with enticing words of man's wisdom, but in demonstration of the Spirit and of power: That your faith should not stand in the wisdom

of men, but in the power of God.” This is a power greater than that which we have seen in today’s release of the Holy Spirit. A new move of God is coming very soon. The last day Church will experience a far greater power than the Early Church experienced. This mighty power of God that is coming is the resurrection power by which Jesus was raised from the dead and declared to be the Son of God.

When my wife and I went to Israel, we saw the empty tomb and the place where the Lord’s body was laid. We are told in the Scriptures that the power of God came into that tomb and Christ was raised from the dead.

However, Christ was not raised alone. There were also others He released at that time. Before the cross, the righteous went down to Paradise when they died (1 Sam. 28). Paradise was somewhere beneath the earth, and was the abode (or resting place) of the righteous.

When Christ was raised from the bowels of the earth, He took all the righteous with Him to heaven. The mighty power of the resurrection of Jesus was so great that all the gates and strongholds of hell could not prevail against it. It not only released Christ from the grave, but also all the Old Testament saints who were captive in the heart of the earth.

Paul prayed that the Spirit-filled church at Ephesus might know “what is the exceeding greatness of his power to us-ward who believe, according to the working of his mighty power, which he wrought in Christ, when he raised him from

the dead, and set him at his own right hand in the heavenly places” (Eph. 1:19-20). Paul wants us to understand how great is this mighty resurrection power.

We need a revelation, which only God can give, for the eyes of our understanding to be enlightened (Eph.1:18). Only then can we fully understand the magnitude of the power of God that was released at the specific moment when Christ was raised from the heart of the earth and multitudes ascended with Him.

The Church and Resurrection Power

In John 5:19 Jesus said, “The Son can do nothing of himself, but what he seeth the Father do.” In this statement, there is a key to the release of the power of God. As the Lord Jesus Christ watched His Father, He showed Him what to do and then the Son did those things. When Christ taught His disciples, He showed them what to do (how to heal the sick, cleanse lepers, raise the dead, and cast out devils - see Mt. 10:7-8). The Church today needs to manifest the works and miracles of Jesus. The Pentecostal movement in France, for example, came into being and grew because people followed Jesus and were used by God to heal the sick.

Before He went to the cross, Jesus made an amazing statement: “He that believeth on me, the works that I do shall he do also; and greater works than these shall he do; because I go unto my Father” (Jn. 14:12). Because of the resurrection, there is a greater power available to the Church of Jesus Christ than

the power that was in operation before the cross. We are going to experience the same anointing that was upon Jesus, but in a far greater measure.

In a small measure, the resurrection power of God was manifested by the early apostles. For example, the very shadow of Peter healed the sick (Acts 5:15-16). Also, “God wrought special miracles by the hands of Paul: so that from his body were brought unto the sick handkerchiefs or aprons, and the diseases departed from them, and the evil spirits went out of them” (Acts 19:11-12).

But in the last days, whole communities and nations are going to be blanketed by the resurrection power of God. We live in exciting times. We need to begin to ask the Lord for the power of His resurrection. It comes as we press on to know Christ and seek to have His character worked out in our lives.

3. THE FELLOWSHIP OF HIS SUFFERINGS

The third qualification that the Apostle Paul lays down for us to participate in the first resurrection is that we must know “the fellowship of His sufferings.” The thought of *knowing* means to actually participate in the sufferings of Christ. Fellowship is based upon common experiences. We cannot really fellowship with those with whom we have little in common. Therefore, to really know the Lord, we must experience what He experienced, and, beloved, this includes suffering.

Years ago, my wife had open-heart surgery on both of her heart valves which had been eaten away by a bacterial infection. She was haemorrhaging profusely after the second surgery and was in so much pain that she began to complain just a little bit. The Lord spoke to her: “Do not make any provision for the flesh, Audrey. I am offering you a more excellent way. This can be an *ordeal* or it can be an *opportunity* for My grace to be poured into you so you will know that My grace is sufficient.”

Many Christians have problems understanding the place and purpose of pain. *Should Christians suffer pain, whether in their body, soul, or spirit?* Well, if we want to be an overcomer and have part in the first resurrection, we must know the fellowship of Christ’s sufferings. There is only one way to know the fellowship of Christ’s sufferings, and that is to experience His sufferings ourselves.

Suffering is a common part of life, and a major theme in the Bible. It is only through suffering that we can come to know Jesus as the Man of sorrows who is acquainted with grief (Isa. 53:3).

While we delight to know the Lord as Jehovah-Rapha our Healer, to know Him fully we must experience the fellowship of His sufferings. Paul said, “If we suffer, we shall also reign with him” (2 Tim. 2:12). Suffering with Jesus is the only way to the throne, and it is the only way we are going to attain unto the first resurrection. Our attitude in suffering determines whether it is going to be an ordeal (and an

obstacle) or a wonderful opportunity to grow in our relationship with the Lord.

Now we need to look at the different aspects of Christ's sufferings, because if we are going to go on with the Lord we will suffer these same things, and we need to know how to triumph in them.

The Sufferings of Christ

1. He suffered in the area of bodily appetites (Mt. 4:3).
2. He suffered in His soul (Mt. 4:6).
3. He suffered in His spirit (Mt. 4:8).
4. He suffered in His body (Isa. 52:14; 50:6).
5. He suffered reproach (Ps. 69:20).
6. He suffered in the area of His will (Lk. 22:42).
7. He suffered in the area of His reputation (Jn. 8:41).
8. He was tempted to wrongly use the power of God to save Himself (Mt. 26:68).
9. He suffered spiritual barrenness (Isa. 53:2).
10. His faith was tested (Mt. 4:3 - "if thou be the Son of God").
11. He suffered in His physical life (Jn. 7:1). The Jews sought to kill Him.

The Sufferings of Christ

12. He was forsaken by loved ones (Jn. 6:66).
13. He experienced betrayal (Mt. 26:48-49).
14. He suffered denial (Mt. 26:69-75).
15. He suffered in seeing a loved one suffer—
His mother (Jn. 19:26).
16. His people, even His own brothers, did not
believe in Him (Jn. 7:5).
17. He suffered martyrdom (Lk. 23:46).

The way to triumph in suffering is to rejoice. Our attitude is so important, for our attitude determines whether we fellowship with Jesus in sufferings. May we “for the joy set before us” endure sufferings that we might know the Lord in a very intimate way (Heb. 12:2).

4. BEING MADE CONFORMABLE UNTO HIS DEATH

The fourth qualification for the first resurrection is that we must be made conformable to the death of Christ. “Being made conformable to His death” should be considered in two aspects:

- 1.) A daily way of life; and
- 2.) A goal to be realized by the end of our earthly life.

Dying Daily

We must first of all realize the necessity of dying daily. Paul testified in 1 Corinthians 15:31, “I die daily.” What he meant is that every day he died to self (his will, desires, and ambitions). Paul said in 2 Corinthians 4:11-12, “For we which live are always delivered unto death for Jesus’ sake, that the life also of Jesus might be made manifest in our mortal flesh. So then death worketh in us, but life in us.”

Dying daily does not imply morbidity, but rather wonderful victory. It is death to the old man, that Christ may release His life through us, through our new man (Christ in us). It is essential that we have an initial experience or encounter with the Lord before we can live and progress in this glorious state of victory.

The initial encounter is found in Romans 6:6 — “*Knowing this* (signifying a knowledge born out of an experience, not merely an intellectual appreciation of a truth) *that our old man was crucified with Christ.*” This is an experience whereby we know that we are dead to our old nature and that we are alive in Christ. Thus, when Paul wrote in Galatians 2:20, “I am crucified with Christ,” he was just stating a fact. As with all experiences, this comes through the sovereign grace of the Lord, as well as through our desire.

Ezekiel 36:37 says, “I will yet for this be inquired of by the house of Israel to do it for them.” The Lord is speaking here about the work of sanctification promised in verses 25-29 of this same chapter. An honest, earnest seeking of the Lord will

result in a deeper cleansing that will bring forth a cry from our spirit, because He has witnessed His truth to our hearts. From that time we will be able to say, because we know it in our hearts: “I am crucified with Christ: nevertheless I live; yet not I, but Christ liveth in me.” From this initial experience there follows the daily *reckoning* and outworking of that which the Holy Spirit has written upon our heart—that our old man is dead, crucified with Christ (see Rom. 6:11-12). We must daily cry out to the Lord to help us not yield our members to unrighteousness, but to righteousness (Rom. 6:13).

Paul emphasizes the same point of the ongoing and ever-deepening experience of dying to self in 2 Corinthians 4. When pouring out his heart to the Corinthian church, Paul said in verses 10-12: “Always bearing about in the body the dying of the Lord Jesus, that the life also of Jesus might be made manifest in our body. For we which live are always delivered unto death for Jesus’ sake, that the life also of Jesus might be made manifest in our mortal flesh. So then death worketh in us, but life in you.”

How can we make this truth clear? Compare these verses with Romans 15:3: “For even Christ pleased not himself; but, as it is written, The reproaches of them that reproached thee fell on me.” In this verse we see two aspects of dying daily:

- 1.) We should seek to please the Lord, not ourselves; and
- 2.) We should embrace the reproaches (or afflictions) of Christ.

First of all, we must lay aside our will, and not seek to please ourselves. We begin to seek only to please the Lord and not to fulfil our own desires, yielding also to the wishes of others.

Paul amplifies this truth in Romans 15:1, where he said, “We then that are strong ought to bear the infirmities of the weak, and not to please ourselves.” This means that we should yield to the whims, foibles, desires, and wishes of a weaker brother. We should especially seek to please the other in marriage. That is where this should be developed the most.

Dying daily also includes sufferings. Just as the master potter kneads, hammers, and squeezes the clay (to remove all traces of air and every foreign substance) before fashioning it into the desired vessel, so our loving Heavenly Father permits persecutions and troubles to work deep within our beings to rid us of all hidden imperfections.

The result of dying daily is that we release life to others and also to ourselves. Life can only come through death. Jesus made this very clear when He said in John 12:24, “Except a corn of wheat fall into the ground and die, it abideth alone: but if it die, it bringeth forth much fruit.” Every time we elect, by the grace of God, to die (to our will) in any given situation, we are releasing the life of Jesus to another. Also, our own spiritual life will grow by leaps and bounds, and the fruits of the Spirit will come to maturity in our lives.

Also, we should be prepared at any moment for our life to end, and to stand before the Lord and give an account of our

lives. None of us knows when our time to die will come, so we should always be prepared. We should daily die to ourselves and live totally for Jesus, and if we do, we can be confident that when our time comes to go be with the Lord, we will be more than conquerors through Him who loved us. Let us, therefore, seek to be made conformable unto His death.

The Mark (3:12-14)

3:12 - *“Not that I have already attained, or am already perfected; but I press on, that I may lay hold of that for which Christ Jesus has also laid hold of me” (NKJV).*

Paul had accomplished much in life, yet he knew that God still had so much more for him to do. We must never become satisfied in the Christian life with one level of blessing, but as did Paul six years before his death, we, too, must ever press on.

3:13-14 - *“Brethren, I count not myself to have apprehended: but this one thing I do, forgetting those things which are behind, and reaching forth unto those things which are [ahead], I press toward the mark for the prize of the high calling of God in Christ Jesus.”*

God did not choose us only to save us from hell, which we rightly deserved, but we were apprehended by God for a specific work—*with a mark to hit and a course to finish!* This is the theme of this book. For Paul, his mission was to be the Apostle to the Gentiles.

We each have an individual mark to hit, and a course to finish. May we fulfil all that God has called us to do and win Christ!

The Apostle Paul said in 1 Corinthians 9:24-27: “Do you not know that those who run in a race all run, but one receives the prize? Run in such a way that you may obtain it. And everyone who competes for the prize is temperate in all things. Now they do it to obtain a perishable crown, but we for an imperishable crown. Therefore I run thus: not with uncertainty. Thus I fight: not as one who beats the air. But I discipline my body and bring it into subjection, lest, when I have preached to others, I myself should become disqualified” (NKJV). Paul was running to win the prize—to cross the finish line and win Jesus Christ!

To finish our race in life and accomplish all that God has purposed for our lives, we must first seek Him to find out what our calling is. The *high* calling of God for every believer is Philippians 3:10-11—that we might qualify to be kings and priests who will rule and reign with Christ in the Millennium. That is God’s ultimate and best for every Christian.

However, God also has a *specific* calling for each individual believer that is unique to him. We want to press on to obtain God’s best for our lives.

In order to finish the race, we must forget those things which are behind (v. 13). We have to forget the past and press on! We must leave behind our former life and all our former ambitions and dreams, seeking only one thing in life—to win the race. Also, we must lay aside everything that will weigh us down. When runners prepare for a race, they seek to be as light as possible and wear light clothing so that they are not weighed down.

As Christians, we must dedicate our lives to winning the race. This involves laying down things, even good things, that will distract us and weigh us down. Paul says in Hebrews 12:1, "... Let us lay aside every weight, and the sin which doth so easily beset [or entangle] us, and let us run with patience the race that is set before us."

Another way to look at pressing toward the mark of the high calling of God is through the example of an *arrow*. The whole purpose of an arrow is that it will hit the mark when it is shot forth. The life of Christ can be seen in this way. Christ was the Arrow of His Father. This thought is developed in Isaiah 49:2: "And he hath made my mouth like a sharp sword; in the shadow of his hand hath he hid me, and made me a polished shaft; in his quiver hath he hid me."

There are basically two parts to an arrow: the arrowhead made of steel like a sword and the polished shaft made of wood. The arrowhead is the sharp point of the arrow. This speaks of the Word of God, which is like a sharp two-edged sword. God wants to write His Word in our hearts and minds, and put His Word in our mouths.

The second aspect of the development of an arrow is that the wooden shaft must be polished so that when it flies through the air, the aerodynamical forces will not deflect it off course due to any rough edge on the shaft. This takes a great amount of time. It is during this time that the Lord works in our lives and smoothes all the “rough edges.”

An arrow which has a sharp arrowhead and a polished shaft is placed in the quiver of the archer until it is time to be shot forth toward its mark. As it was with Christ, this is one of the most difficult times in our preparation. We are ready and yet we seem to be going nowhere, “spinning our wheels” as it were. Yet God is doing a further work of refining in our lives, mellowing us. Then at His appointed time, we are set in our course; and how well we responded to our time of preparation determines whether we will hit the mark or be deflected off course.

We have to learn to overcome offences, for if we don't, we will be taken off course by one thing or another, as in the case of Barnabas (Acts 15:36-41). Barnabas became offended because Paul did not want to take his nephew John Mark with them on their second missionary journey.

Paul, however, had very good reasons for not wanting to take Mark with them again. Mark had deserted them on their first missionary journey, and Paul did not think it was wise for him to go with them at that time.

Barnabas, because of human ties, became offended. He took Mark with him and sailed to Cyprus—which probably was

his home country (Acts 4:36)—and he is never heard of again in Scripture. Silas took his place and went with Paul, having the blessing of the church (Acts 15:40). Remember, in Acts 13 the Lord revealed through the Holy Spirit the call that was upon the lives of Barnabas and Paul. They were called to minister to the Gentiles. Yet Barnabas never finished his course; he never hit God's mark for his life.

What happened to a man who started out so well and had so much potential and so many promises? Barnabas was called of God, anointed of God in Acts 13, and shot forth as an arrow with Paul toward the mark of God. Yet he fell short of the mark of God's best for his life—he was a *deflected arrow*, a *disqualified runner*. The problem is that Barnabas became offended. He took up the offence of John Mark, and it destroyed him. How sad indeed, because in the end Mark overcame his immaturity, became profitable unto Paul (2 Tim. 4:11), and was used by God to write the Gospel that bears his name. In the end, Mark did triumph; yet Barnabas, because he was offended, never finished his course.

We must realize that God has a very specific plan for each of our lives. The Lord has a blueprint for our lives, and when we die we are held accountable as to whether or not we finished our course. The Lord made this so clear to me many years ago when I asked Him to end my life and take me to heaven because of the terrible opposition and persecution I was facing at that time. The Lord granted my request, and I physically died. When I got to heaven, the Lord showed me the whole of my life from my childbirth until the time I died.

Yet I saw that there was much more God had purposed for my life, but I had not finished it. Yes, I was a Christian, and I made it to heaven, but I had not hit God's mark for my life!

I hope none of you ever experiences the terrible agony I felt in my spirit. I knew I had died before my appointed time. After I pleaded with the Lord to send me back to earth and give me another chance to finish my course, He graciously revived me and my spirit came back into my body.

Since that time, the burden upon my heart for the Church of Jesus Christ is that every believer finishes his course, as Christ did. As the Lord was preparing to go to the cross, He said to His Father in John 17:4, "I have glorified thee on the earth: I have finished the work which thou gavest me to do." Christ had come to the earth to be the Lamb of God who would die for the sins of the world, and He finished His course.

We want to be able to say with Paul at the end of our lives: "I am now ready to be offered, and the time of my departure is at hand. I have fought a good fight, *I have finished my course*, I have kept the faith" (2 Tim. 4:6-7). We want to be runners that win the race and win the prize; and arrows that hit God's predetermined mark for our lives.

Determine in your heart today that you are not going to be satisfied with second best, but only with God's very best for your life. **May we ever press on for God's highest, not settling for second best.**

3:15 - *“Let us therefore, as many as be perfect, be thus minded: and if in any thing ye be otherwise minded, God shall reveal even this unto you.”* This verse is difficult to understand in English, but what it really means is that a person who has come to a degree of maturity in Christ should still be pressing on in order to fulfill all that the Lord has purposed for him upon this earth. There is no relaxation or retirement for the Christian. We must redeem every minute of the day, and make every moment count for eternity.

As Paul closes this section, he tells us that if we are not totally fulfilling God’s purposes for our lives, we may with confidence expect that the Lord will reveal it to us. God will convict us if we are erring in an area of our lives. The Lord made it very clear to my wife and I many years ago that a born-again Christian never suddenly *falls* into sin, as the catch phrase of today goes. Before a person backslides and commits sin, he has ignored many warning signs by the Lord.

The Lord puts checkpoints along every path that leads to sin. The Lord warns us again and again. Only after a person has not listened to the Lord will he fall into sin. Therefore, if we listen to the Lord, we never have to fear about going off course. He is able to keep us from falling (Jude 1:24). All we have to do is be sensitive to Him and respond to what He is saying, and we will attain unto the fullness of the stature of Christ and be presented faultless and blameless before His throne with great joy.

May we be as Daniel, who was told at the end of his life that that he would stand in his appointed place in heaven. He hit the

mark for his life, as did John the Baptist, of whom the Scriptures testify that he “finished his course” (Acts 13:25).

CHAPTER 7

Paul the Example

3:16-21

After making known our spiritual and heavenly goal, which is to have Christ formed in us and to fulfil our ministry so that we can be kings and priests serving Him throughout eternity, the Apostle Paul now speaks of our spiritual walk.

This is a theme he also develops in his epistle to the Ephesians, which is governed by three words: *sit*, *walk*, and *stand*. We are *seated* in heavenly places with Christ, and then from that position of authority we are to *walk* worthy of that heavenly vocation, which will enable us to *stand* and resist the attacks of the enemy.

3:16 - *“Nevertheless, whereto we have already attained, let us walk by the same rule, let us mind the same thing.”* The Apostle Paul exhorts us to walk according to this maxim of continually pressing on and reaching forward toward the goal as does an athlete in order to cross the finish line. We must walk with determination, and not let anything deflect us. Let our minds be set and fixed on the goal.

Followers Together of Christ

3:17 - *“Brethren, join in following my example, and note those who so walk, as you have us for a pattern”* (NKJV). Paul’s life

was without blemish; therefore, he could openly invite his fellow Christians not only to listen to his preaching, but also to imitate his way of life (see chapter 4:9). Very few men or women throughout the centuries of the Church Age would be able to offer themselves as an example to be followed.

Not only does the Apostle Paul offer himself as a model of Christian living, but he also encourages the Philippians to emulate those who are with him. Paul also said in 1 Corinthians 11:1, “Be ye followers [or imitators] of me, even as I also am of Christ.”

Now his tone changes to chagrin as he mentions others who do not have such a shining testimony:

3:18-19 - *“(For many walk, of whom I have told you often, and now tell you even weeping, that they are the enemies of the cross of Christ: Whose end is destruction, whose God is their belly, and whose glory is in their shame, who mind earthly things.)”* In all probability Paul is referring to Christians who have been led astray by the teachings of the Gnostics. The Gnostics were a sect which taught, among other heretical things, that it did not matter how one lived in the flesh. They diminished the importance of the moral standards upheld in the Word of God. The Gnostics had infiltrated the Early Church by this time, and they were corrupting the purity of the Gospel of Christ.

They not only excused sin, but openly encouraged the most vile immoral practices, teaching that a man was not complete

until he had experienced everything that life had to offer, both good and bad. Paul is quick to point to the end of such wicked workers of iniquity—they will be cast into the lake of fire.

The Lord Himself also gave warning in Matthew 7:21-23 of the end of such who held the truth in unrighteousness: “Not every one that saith unto me, Lord, Lord, shall enter into the kingdom of heaven; but he that doeth the will of my Father which is in heaven. Many will say to me in that day, Lord, Lord, have we not prophesied in thy name? and in thy name have cast out devils? and in thy name done many wonderful works? And then will I profess unto them, I never knew you: depart from me, ye that work iniquity.” Beloved, let us beware, and remember that it is the pure in heart who will see God.

3:20 - *“For our conversation is in heaven; from whence also we look for the Saviour, the Lord Jesus Christ.”* This verse may best be translated that our citizenship is in heaven. The NKJV version reads: “For our citizenship is in heaven, from which we also eagerly wait for the Saviour, the Lord Jesus Christ.” This is a truth that the Philippians would appreciate. Because Philippi was a colony of Rome, its citizens enjoyed Roman citizenship. Although they lived in Philippi, they were Romans, and received all the privileges of Roman citizens, as if they were in actuality living in the capital of the Empire itself. Paul reminds them, as well as us, that as Christians they are citizens of heaven, and should conduct themselves as such.

Paul also says that we look for the soon appearing of the King of Kings. These colonies looked forward to a visit from the

Roman emperor with great anticipation. When Christ the King of Kings and Lord of Lords comes He will do what no Roman emperor could possibly do—He will transform us into His image and make us like Him.

3:21 - *“Who will transform our lowly body that it may be conformed to His glorious body, according to the working by which He is able even to subdue all things to Himself” (NKJV).* At His Second Coming, the Lord will cause our mortal bodies to put on immortality (1 Cor. 15:53-54).

CHAPTER 8

The Peace of God

4:1-9

Peace, which is synonymous with prosperity, is one of the most treasured of all gifts. Nations and individuals alike seek it and are willing to pay a tremendous price for it. Nations like Israel are willing even to cede their God-given territory to obtain it.

However, true peace is not the result of compromise with an enemy, but it is the gift of one who is in right relationship with God through our Lord Jesus Christ, who is the Prince (or source) of Peace (cf. Rom. 5:1).

4:1 - *“Therefore, my brethren, dearly beloved and longed for, my joy and crown, so stand fast in the Lord, my dearly beloved.”* Again we see the deep love Paul had for his precious friends in Philippi, calling them his joy and crown. We realize, therefore, that our spiritual children are our inheritance. When we stand before the throne of God, we will be rewarded according to the spiritual status and maturity of our spiritual children. Thus we should seek the well-being of those whom the Lord entrusts into our care so that they may all come to the full stature of Christ.

He then follows this with the admonition to stand fast in the Lord. So many start out well and yet do not finish. They waver

in their beliefs and are soon moved away from the purity of the Gospel of Christ. The criteria of a battle is for the troops to hold their positions. The lowest rank of officer is fitly called a *lieutenant*, which when translated from the French simply means “one who holds his place.” Having then done all, let us remain firm and steadfast in our resolve never to yield to the onslaught of the enemy, knowing that the Lord will not permit us to have more than we can withstand (1 Cor. 10:13)

4:2 - *“I beseech Euodias, and beseech Syntyche, that they be of the same mind in the Lord.”* As we mentioned in the Preface, by their disputes these two women could have caused havoc in the whole church. It is essential that women learn to have a meek and quiet spirit for there to be unity and harmony in the home and in the church (1 Pet. 3:4).

4:3 - *“And I entreat thee also, true yokefellow, help those women which laboured with me in the gospel, with Clement also, and with other my fellowlabourers, whose names are in the book of life.”* Now he turns to those women who are hard workers. They certainly have little time for idle chatter and do not fall into the category of busybodies.

Read 1 Timothy 5:1-16 for an excellent discourse on the role of a pious woman, as well as Proverbs 31:10-31.

4:4 - *“Rejoice in the Lord always: and again I say, Rejoice.”* Taking up once again the theme of this epistle, the Apostle Paul encourages his friends to rejoice at all times. This spiritual exercise is so important, for it brings strength to our whole

being and enables us to triumph over circumstances and foes alike.

If we will practice this when we arise in the morning and throughout the day, we will see the difference in our daily walk. We will become more than conquerors! The fruit of rejoicing is joy. As we rejoice, joy (a fruit of the Spirit) will be developed in our being and it will abound.

4:5 - *“Let your moderation [or gentleness] be known unto all men. The Lord is at hand.”* As Christians, we should remember that we are not to be secret believers. We should let our light shine so that others may see our good works and glorify God, as Christ said in Matthew 5:16. In particular, Paul urges his friends to let the gentleness of Christ be manifested to all, a virtue which was very rare in the coarseness of Roman society.

The Peace of God

This is one of the most precious truths and experiences in the Christian life. The Lord Himself said in the Upper Room after the Last Supper when Judas Iscariot had left, “Peace I leave with you, my peace I give unto you” (Jn. 14:27). What a blessing it is to have the peace of God. The Apostle Paul now shows us the way to have that abiding peace of Christ as our portion day by day.

4:6 - *“Be [over-anxious] for nothing; but in every thing by prayer and supplication with thanksgiving let your requests*

be made known unto God.” Paul exhorts us not to be worried or troubled. Christ said to His disciples in Matthew 6:25-33: “Therefore I say unto you, Take no thought for your life, what ye shall eat, or what ye shall drink; nor yet for your body, what ye shall put on. Is not the life more than meat, and the body than raiment? Behold the fowls of the air: for they sow not, neither do they reap, nor gather into barns; yet your heavenly Father feedeth them. Are ye not much better than they? Which of you by taking thought can add one cubit unto his stature? And why take ye thought for raiment? Consider the lilies of the field, how they grow; they toil not, neither do they spin: And yet I say unto you, That even Solomon in all his glory was not arrayed like one of these. Wherefore, if God so clothe the grass of the field, which to day is, and to morrow is cast into the oven, shall he not much more clothe you, O ye of little faith? Therefore take no thought, saying, What shall we eat? or, What shall we drink? or, Wherewithal shall we be clothed? (For after all these things do the Gentiles seek:) for your heavenly Father knoweth that ye have need of all these things. But seek ye first the kingdom of God, and his righteousness; and all these things shall be added unto you.”

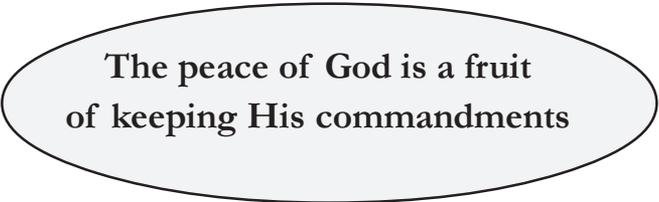
We should not worry about what we will eat, what we will wear, or where we will live, for our Heavenly Father knows our needs and will care for them. Years ago while I was speaking on Philippians 4:6 in a certain church, I had a vision of the Lord passing through the pews carrying a basket into which He was inviting members of the congregation to place their requests and concerns, and He would take care of them.

When I announced this vision to the congregation, I then saw again in a vision how many were responding and placing their burdens and worries into the Lord's basket, and as a result His peace came over their minds and hearts. However, some were unable to leave them in the basket and would take back their problems and incur fresh worries and anxieties.

Let us give our concerns and worries to the Lord so that His peace may govern our lives, sparing ourselves much needless agony. May we exchange our worries, fears, and anxieties for the peace of God.

4:7 - *“And the peace of God, which passeth all understanding, shall [guard] your hearts and minds through Christ Jesus.”*

The peace of God will keep us and protect us in every situation. Everyone wants peace, and we all know that we are supposed to have peace, but the question is, *How do we get peace?* Peace is a fruit of keeping the commandments of God. The Lord says in Isaiah 48:18, “O that thou hadst hearkened to my commandments! then had thy peace been as a river, and thy righteousness as the waves of the sea.” The Psalmist said, “Great peace have they which love thy law: and nothing shall offend them” (Ps. 119:165).



**The peace of God is a fruit
of keeping His commandments**

The Pathway to Peace

The following steps constitute the pathway to peace:

- 1) Walking in the light and obeying the Lord's commandments
- 2) Allowing God to put things right in our lives

We must walk in the light (1 Jn. 1:7) and obey the words of God (see Ps. 37:37). This is the first requirement to obtain peace. Also, Paul says in Romans 5:1, "Therefore being justified by faith, we have peace with God through our Lord Jesus Christ." Peace comes as a result of being justified (made righteous) line upon line.

The act of justifying is a term printer's use for the process of straightening the right side of a document that has been typed on a typewriter. This is what the Lord wants to do in our lives. He wants to make us straight and righteous, even as He is righteous. These are the two steps that lead us to the glorious peace of God that surpasses all understanding.

The Pathway to Victory

Paul continues in verse 8 with further instruction, which I was shown in a vision. I saw a path leading into someone's ear. The path had eight gates. At the end of the path furthest from the ear, there was a demon who was trying to speak into this person's ear. However, the demon was challenged

by the eight gates which are named for us in the following verse:

4:8 - *“Finally, brethren, whatsoever things are true, whatsoever things are honest, whatsoever things are just, whatsoever things are pure, whatsoever things are lovely, whatsoever things are of good report; if there be any virtue, and if there be [anything praiseworthy], think on these things.”* Our thought-life conditions our actions, and eventually determines our character. Solomon said, “As a man thinketh, so is he” (Prov. 23:7).

Therefore, our thought-life should be conditioned by these challenges to our thoughts and our meditations. These eight gates will enable the meditations of our heart and mind to be acceptable in the Lord’s sight (Ps. 19:14). Every time we meditate on something, we should ask ourselves the following eight questions:

1. Is this thought true? If we begin to examine the suppositions that enter into our minds and often cause us so much sorrow, we will find that so often they are not even true. Many things are hearsay or rumors, and not factual. These thoughts should be classified as vain imaginations, and be dismissed from our mind immediately.

2. Is this thought honest? The Greek usage of the word *honest* actually means “venerable, worthy of reverence, or producing a holy seriousness.” Thus we should ask ourselves if this thought will make us take stock of our life. If so, we

can let it pass gate number two, but if not, we must refuse to let it lodge within our mind.

3. Is this thought just or righteous? Does this thought accurately portray the situation or the person of whom one speaks? If so, open gate number three.

4. Is this thought pure? Our thoughts must be pure, especially in the sense of sexually pure. We should ask ourselves: Will this thought make me purer if I let it into my mind? If not, we should immediately shut the gate upon it so that it does not progress any further down the path into our ears (meaning our inner ears) that will transmit to our minds.

5. Is this thought lovely or pleasing? Will this thought make me a more loving and pleasant person?

6. Is this thought a good report? In the Greek, a *good report* means “a fair and unbiased review of an action, circumstance or a person.”

7. Is this thought virtuous? *Virtuous* in the Greek signifies mental or moral excellence. Is this an excellent thought?

8. Is this thought praiseworthy? Can this thought be lauded as something that will lift us up to higher heights in God? If so, think on it.

The word *think* in the Greek means “an act of careful reflection or meditation.” It carries with it the idea of

assimilating a thought into our very being so that it aids in molding and strengthening our character. The art of meditation has been long lost in our education system, but in the Kingdom of God it is an art that is essential to cultivate for our spiritual development.

We refer you to the exhortation of King Solomon in Psalm 1:2-3: “Blessed is the man that walketh not in the counsel of the ungodly, nor standeth in the way of sinners, nor sitteth in the seat of the scornful. But his delight is in the law of the LORD; and in his law doth he meditate day and night.” What we meditate upon is ultimately what we will become like.

4:9 - *“Those things, which ye have both learned, and received, and heard, and seen in me, do: and the God of peace shall be with you.”* As he did in chapter 3:17, Paul is once again asking the Philippian believers to look upon him as their role model. They are to practise:

- 1.) *Everything they had learned from Paul’s personal interpretations of the Holy Scriptures and his teaching ministry;*
- 2.) *All the traditions and doctrines embraced by the Early Church (see the Apostles’ Creed in Acts 15:19-29);*
- 3.) *And everything they heard about him as well as what they observed in his life. (This*

is something very few preachers or teachers today could say.)

May God grant that our lives be such pure channels of Christ that men and women everywhere could look upon us and see the undistorted Word made flesh in us. We want to be living letters of the Gospel message to others. Paul goes on to say that those who are imitators of him will be enveloped with the God of Peace.

As we put into practice these simple spiritual rules which have been enunciated for us in verses 6-8, we will know the glorious presence of the God of Peace.

CHAPTER 9

Holy Contentment

4:10-13

Being content regardless of how good or bad our circumstances may be is a gift from the Lord. It comes as we practice the spiritual truths delineated for us in verses 4-8.

I have entitled this passage *Holy Contentment* (with the emphasis on *holy*) because there is a contentment that the Laodicean church had with regard to their spiritual condition which was unholy. Their contentment was built upon a false premise of their spirituality, seen from their point of view, not God's.

The result was that they were not pressing on to know the Lord, and were blind and wretched. They were content with their superficial knowledge of the Lord. We must never be content in this way. We must ever press on in our Christian experience to know the Lord in a greater way. Unfortunately, many of God's dear children today have that same false sense of contentment. *True* contentment is a holy acceptance with joy of every situation in which our loving Heavenly Father places us.

4:10 - *“But I rejoiced in the Lord greatly, that now at the last your care of me hath flourished again; wherein ye were also*

careful, but ye lacked opportunity.” The church at Philippi could be characterized as a church that had *a bountiful eye* (Prov. 22:9). They foresaw Paul’s needs. Out of the goodness and largeness of their heart they sent gifts to Paul in his distress. They watched over him with the tender care of a mother for her favourite son, ever seeking his welfare.

This is a wonderful virtue that we should develop with respect to our pastor, missionaries, and all the members of the Church that may be in need. We want our branch to go over the wall, having that same bountiful eye for those who may not as yet be in the Kingdom of God, so that in the day of visitation they may remember our good works and glorify God (1 Pet. 2:12).

4:11 - “*Not that I speak in respect of want: for I have learned, in whatsoever state I am, therewith to be content.*” One very important truth that should not be missed in this verse is that contentment is a learning process. It is not achieved instantly—it is a *process*. Paul said he *learned* to be content. How, then, can we enter into this blessed state of true contentment? Let me suggest the following steps:

- 1.) *There must be a commitment to the will of God, without which we will not have true peace and joy—the signs of serene contentment. By experience, we must know that we have died to our own will and we live only for Him. This is a work of the Holy Spirit of grace.*

- 2.) *From this inner knowing that we are dead to our ways and alive only to His will, we die daily. This is a process which leads to a holy acceptance of every situation we face throughout the day as being permitted for our good by our loving and caring Heavenly Father.*

- 3.) *As we walk in this experience and accept every situation that comes into our lives, we then come to possess true contentment.*

4:12 - *“I know both how to be abased, and I know how to abound: every where and in all things I am instructed both to be full and to be hungry, both to abound and to suffer need.”* Paul now describes the fruit of this life of blessedness. He had learned how to be content in times of need as well as in times of abundance and prosperity.

No matter what experience or situation in which Paul found himself, this holy contentment exuded from deep within his being. His bodily appetites, as well as the emotions of his soul, and his spiritual needs were at peace. Paul said in 1Timothy 6:6, “Godliness with contentment is great gain.” This is the life of victory in Christ.

I have noticed time and time again that when people demand to have the best of everything, it marks the beginning of their ruin. I feel so sorry for those who always demand better living conditions because they are disqualifying themselves from

God's best. In Switzerland, I was the director of a very nice hotel, which also served as a Bible school. We had students from other countries who were extremely wealthy. When they came to our hotel, they were very appreciative of everything they were given.

However, we also had some students from a very poor part of Greece. They came from homes that had dirt floors. Do you know that the students who had been poor all of their lives were not content at the hotel? They wanted a different rug, better chairs, and all kinds of other things. Isn't that amazing? I have been in the ministry for over 40 years and have taught in a number of Bible schools and have been to many churches, and I have noticed that those who succeed in the Christian life are those who are grateful and content. Those who always complain and demand better conditions never make it. Holy contentment is the way to victory; and Paul concludes this triumphant declaration by stating:

4:13 - *"I can do all things through Christ which strengtheneth me."* This is a scripture that has been a reality in my own life for many years. Throughout my dear wife's paralysis, I had to take care of her by myself. Sometimes it involved arising every 20 minutes or so throughout a 24-hour period. This lasted for four years. My body became so tired and lifeless that it just would not respond.

When I cried out to the Lord, He gave me this Scripture. New life and vigour came into my spirit, soul, and body, imparting to me the divine strength needed to care for her needs. Truly,

we can do all things through Christ who strengthens us! We will never encounter anything in life over which the grace of God cannot cause us to triumph.

**I can do all things through Christ
which strengtheneth me**

CHAPTER 10

The Love Gift

4:14-20

In verses 14-20, Paul is speaking of the love gift of the Philippians to him. The Philippians supported the Apostle Paul not only in their service and prayers, but also with their finances, even though they were a poor church. By their example, we will see the steps to abundant giving in Jesus Christ.

4:14 - *“Nevertheless you have done well that you shared in my distress” (NKJV).* Irrespective of the fact that Paul had such victory in every circumstance, his heart rejoiced when he received help from his friends. The help of others ameliorates or improves our conditions. The Philippian church was a very loving and caring congregation. In fact, Paul says that they excelled the other congregations in the ministry of giving.

4:15 - *“Now ye Philippians know also, that in the beginning of the gospel, when I departed from Macedonia, no church [shared with] me as concerning giving and receiving, but ye only.”* The Philippians did not assume that Paul had sufficient for his needs. They made diligent inquiries about his particular needs, as well as the Christian outlook on giving and receiving. Although Paul does not elaborate on these virtues in this

epistle, through combining his other letters and the Lord's own admonitions, we are able to understand God's desire for us as Christians in the realm of giving.

In the Sermon on the Mount, the Lord clearly declared a blessing upon those who give. He said in Luke 6:38, "Give, and it shall be given unto you; good measure, pressed down, and shaken together, and running over, shall men give into your bosom. For with the same measure that ye [use] withal it shall be measured to you again."

The Lord also taught us *how* we should give in Luke 6:30: "Give to every man that asketh of thee; and of him that taketh away thy goods ask them not again." This commandment is an extension of the Pentateuch teaching on giving in Deuteronomy 15:7-8: "If there be among you a poor man of one of thy brethren within any of thy gates in thy land which the LORD thy God giveth thee, thou shalt not harden thine heart, nor shut thine hand from thy poor brother: But thou shalt open thine hand wide unto him, and shalt surely lend him sufficient for his need, in that which he wanteth."

A high degree of consecration is necessary to dispose of our earthly goods. It is easier, of course, when we have practiced it from our youth under the guidance of our parents until it becomes a way of life to us—flowing from a heart that genuinely feels and cares for the needs of others.

There is a sequence of steps that Paul writes to the Corinthians which I believe contains the keys to help us in our quest to be

perfected in the realm of giving. In writing to the Corinthians, Paul cites the case of the churches of Macedonia (meaning those at Philippi) in 2 Corinthians 8:1-4: “And now, brothers, we want you to know about the grace that God has given the Macedonian churches. Out of the most severe trial, their overflowing joy and their extreme poverty welled up in rich generosity. For I testify that they gave as much as they were able, and even beyond their ability. Entirely on their own, they urgently pleaded with us for the privilege of sharing in this service to the saints” (NIV).

Here are the sequential steps to abundant giving in Christ Jesus:

1. *First, we should give ourselves to the Lord.* This is the prerequisite for any ministry. We must have a deep personal consecration to the Lord Jesus Christ, doing everything for Him and unto Him (see Col. 3:23).
2. *Then we should give ourselves to our leadership.* The Philippians gave themselves to the Apostle Paul and to those who were travelling with him. Thus the next act of consecration is to give ourselves to our pastor and the leadership of the church to which the Lord has joined us.
3. *We must also have a commitment to giving and have a willing mind.* 2 Corinthians 8:12 says, “For if there be first a willing mind, it is accepted according to that a man hath, and not according to that he hath not.” We are not expected to give what we don’t have. The Lord does not expect us to give

a million dollars if we do not have it. If all we have is a “widow’s mite” and we give it with the right attitude, it is worth more in the sight of God than millions given with the wrong motive or with a bad attitude (see Mark 12:41-44).

What God looks at in giving is our *attitude*. Are we giving out of obligation, or willingly? Remember, God loves a *cheerful* giver, not a reluctant giver (2 Cor. 9:7). The Lord wants us to abound in the grace of giving. Second Corinthians 8:7 says, “Therefore, as ye abound in every thing, in faith, and utterance, and knowledge, and in all diligence, and in your love to us, see that ye abound in this grace also.”

Paul says in 2 Corinthians 9:6-8: “But this I say, He which soweth sparingly shall reap also sparingly; and he which soweth bountifully shall reap also bountifully. Every man according as he purposeth in his heart, so let him give; not grudgingly, or of necessity: for God loveth a cheerful giver. And God is able to make all grace abound toward you; that ye, always having all sufficiency in all things, may abound to every good work.”

**What God looks at in giving
is our attitude**

As we give ourselves to the Lord and our leadership, and abound in Christian giving, the Lord pours His grace into our lives. Giving with a pure heart releases the grace of God to

us. We should not give expecting to receive more in return from the Lord, but give out of a free heart.

4:16 - *“For even in Thessalonica you sent aid once and again for my necessities” (NKJV).* These Macedonian churches had also helped Paul and his companions since the day he left them, going to the city of Thessalonica to found a church there. This is remarkable because Paul was only in Thessalonica for three sabbaths (Acts 17:2). Yet even during this short period of time the Philippian church sent him love gifts to help with his necessities, and for this he commends them.

4:17 - *“Not because I desire a gift: but I desire fruit that may abound to your account.”* Because Paul had entered into this blessed state of holy contentment, he was not seeking gifts for himself, but rather he wanted them to give so that they might have eternal fruit and that they might receive a blessing. Paul said in Acts 20:35, quoting Christ, “I have showed you all things, how that so labouring ye ought to support the weak, and to remember the words of the Lord Jesus, how he said, It is more blessed to give than to receive.”

Well do I remember an event I witnessed when I was young in the faith. An elderly minister was recounting how after he had been helping someone in need for some time, a young Christian in the faith came to him and said: “You have helped this poor individual enough. Now it is my turn to help.” The minister rejoiced, not that he would be spared the labour of helping the poor, but that this new Christian would start

receiving fruit that would be recorded in heaven in the book of his life. Paul then turns to his own condition, saying:

4:18 - *“But I have all, and abound: I am full, having received of Epaphroditus the things which were sent from you, an odour of a sweet smell, a sacrifice acceptable, wellpleasing to God.”* Paul was satisfied, for all of his needs were always met by the Lord, and now his needs had been met through the gift that the Philippian church sent him with Epaphroditus, the apostolic messenger of the Macedonian churches. But this gift is something special, for Paul says it is like a pleasant perfume to the nostrils of God—an offering that gives pleasure to the Almighty Himself. It reminds us of the words of our Lord in Matthew 25:40: “Inasmuch as ye have done it unto one of the least of these my brethren, ye have done it unto me.”

In verse 19 we are given one of the most comforting promises to mere mortals in this world living in times of hardship and difficulties.

4:19 - *“But my God shall supply all your need according to his riches in glory by Christ Jesus.”* This flows so well with the promise of our Lord Himself in Matthew 6:31-33, where He said: “Therefore do not worry, saying, ‘What shall we eat?’ or ‘What shall we drink?’ or ‘What shall we wear?’ For after all these things the Gentiles seek. For your heavenly Father knows that you need all these things. But seek first the kingdom of God and His righteousness, and all these things shall be added to you” (NKJV).

4:20 - *“Now unto God and our Father be glory for ever and ever. Amen.”* Paul ends with this very beautiful doxology. May we always give the Lord all the glory, for He alone is worthy.

CHAPTER 11

Closing Salutation

4:21-23

From the least to the greatest, Paul includes everyone in this closing greeting to the congregations in Macedonia; for the Church of Jesus Christ is all-comprehensive.

4:21-22 - *“Salute every saint in Christ Jesus. The brethren which are with me greet you. All the saints salute you, chiefly they that are of Caesar’s household.”* When we look into the Lord’s eyes, which are full of compassion, He makes us feel so loved and special. We feel as if He died on the cross just for us. The Lord is so gracious—He has a special place in His heart for everyone. In Isaiah 49:16 the Lord says that He has engraven us upon the palms of His hands, which He did upon Calvary’s cross.

The term *Caesar’s household* does not refer to those in the actual house of the emperor, but those in government service. By Paul’s time, the Gospel had infiltrated and made converts of every class of society.

4:23 - *“The grace of our Lord Jesus Christ be with you all. Amen.”* Paul closes this epistle with the customary benediction of the Early Church. Truly, we are only what we are by the grace of God (1 Cor. 15:10). Amen!

EPILOGUE

In this short letter, the Apostle Paul shows us the marvellous victory that is possible in Jesus Christ. We can obtain victory in life and over our circumstances through having a rejoicing spirit. We want to experience the peace of God that passes all understanding and be strengthened by the Lord in our time of need. Then we will be able to declare from experience that we can do all things through Christ who strengthens us.

If we do these things, we shall live in the blessed state of holy contentment which the Apostle Paul knew. Beloved, let us consistently practice these spiritual exercises and we will, as God promised the seed of Jacob, ride upon the high places of the earth—being victorious over all our foes and obstacles alike (Isa 58:14).

As we have already stated, the theme of this book is to hit the mark of the high calling of God in Christ Jesus—to fulfil *all* of the will of God for our lives. Paul, who so exhorts us, did so himself, for at the end of his life he could write to his beloved son in the faith, Timothy, “I have fought a good fight, I have finished my course, I have kept the faith: Henceforth there is laid up for me a crown of righteousness, which the Lord, the righteous judge, shall give me at that day: and not to me only, but unto all them also that love his appearing.”

It is the prayer and fervent desire of all those who have helped with this book that you, gentle reader, with us will hit the

mark of the high calling of God in Christ Jesus for your life.
May God bless you and make it so. Amen!

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