

PHILIPPIANS

“REJOICE IN THE LORD ALWAYS”

“Our ability to rejoice in Christ during good and difficult times shows the world that God is living within us by the power of His Holy Spirit.”

Notes and Outline

By

David E. Rembert

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Philippians

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Digging Deeper Bible Studies

Posted is a Digging Deeper Bible study that is a companion to each chapter of the Notes and Outlines on the book of Philippians. It digs deeper into the main theme presented in each chapter of the Notes and Outline. It can be used for individual growth or group Bible study. It is recommended that each chapter of the Notes and Outlines on the book of Philippians be read in conjunction with the Digging Deeper Bible study.

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CHAPTER ONE

ACTS 16:9-40**INTRODUCTION TO PHILIPPIANS****Philippians 4:4**

“Rejoice in the Lord always; again I will say rejoice!”

INTRODUCTION

In 61 AD the apostle Paul was under house arrest in Rome for preaching the gospel. He was waiting for his trial hoping to come before Caesar, since he was a Roman citizen (**Acts 28:19**). His life was at stake (**Philippians 1:20**). He was in chains (**Acts 28:20**) and guarded (**Acts 28:16**) by a member of the Roman Praetorian Guard (**Philippians 1:13**) twenty-four hours a day, seven days a week for two years (**Acts 28:30**).

Being under house arrest meant that Paul had to pay for his own rented quarters, even though he could not earn the money to do so while in chains. If he did not pay the rent he would be thrown into the dungeon with hardened criminals and would not see the light of day. Paul was totally dependent upon the Lord to provide for his needs through the gracious gifts of other believers in order for him to stay under house arrest.

Being under house arrest allowed Paul to have visitors. One of those visitors was a man by the name of Epaphroditus who brought a very generous gift to Paul from the Philippian church. In **Philippians 4:18**, Paul said, *“But I have received everything in full and have an abundance; I am amply supplied, having received from Epaphroditus what you have sent, a fragrant aroma, an acceptable sacrifice, well-pleasing to God.”* Receiving this gift prompted Paul to write a thank you letter to the Philippian church, which Epaphroditus delivered. It is an uplifting letter full of joy. It describes the trust and reliance that Paul had in Christ that resulted in him experiencing the fullness of joy in Christ.

Paul had a very special relationship with the church at Philippi. He founded the church on his second missionary journey. So, when Paul saw Epaphroditus it brought joy to his heart as well as many memories. I think it will be helpful, as part of the introduction to this book, to look at how the church at Philippi was started. To do that we must look at **Acts 16:9-40**.

BACKGROUND

The Philippian church was located within the city of Philippi. It was the first church on the European continent. The city of Philippi was a hillside town located about nine miles inland from the Aegean Sea overlooking the Bay of Neapolis. The city was named after King Philip of Macedonia who happened to be the father of Alexander the Great.

When Paul arrived in Philippi the city was under the control of Rome. It was a military outpost for Rome and located on the main highway leading to Rome. Today the city of Philippi would be located in northern Greece.

Paul, Silas, Timothy and Luke were led by the Holy Spirit to go to Macedonia and preach the gospel. Notice what happened in **Acts 16:6-10**. It says, *“They passed through the Phrygian and Galatian region, having been forbidden by the Holy Spirit to speak the word in Asia; and after they came to Mysia, they were trying to go into Bithynia, and the Spirit of Jesus did not permit them; and passing by Mysia, they came down to Troas. A vision appeared to Paul in the night: a man of Macedonia was standing and appealing to him, and saying, ‘Come over to Macedonia and help us.’”* When he had seen the vision, immediately we sought to go into Macedonia, concluding that God had called us to preach the gospel to them.” In this passage we get to see **Proverbs 16:9** implemented, which says, *“The mind of man plans his way, but the LORD directs his steps.”* This Biblical principle is extremely important to those in ministry. Sometimes the Holy Spirit says not now, not that way, or not here. However, when our plans and goals are in alignment with the Word of God and the will of God and we are delighting ourselves in the Lord, then He will give us the desires of our heart, but it is going to be done His way and in His timing. We will be led by the Holy Spirit.

Paul had a desire to preach the gospel and to build up the church. His plans and goals were in alignment with the Word of God and the will of God. He wanted to go east into Asia to preach the gospel but the Holy Spirit did not allow Him to go there. We are not sure how the Holy Spirit prevented Paul from going in one direction or another. Perhaps it was bad weather or political unrest. Paul tried to go north to preach the gospel but the Holy Spirit stopped him. He came from the South so maybe he should go back. No! The Holy Spirit was leading Paul to Europe – to Macedonia. The Lord was taking Paul to a whole new continent where the gospel had not yet been preached. I am sure Paul prayed: Where in Macedonia? The Holy Spirit led Paul to one of the leading cities – the city of Philippi.

After being in the city for a few days Paul decided to go outside the city to the Gangites River where he hoped to find a place where people were praying. Apparently Paul did not find any prayer groups within the city, such as a synagogue, so he went outside the city (**Acts 16:11-15**).

That is where Paul met Lydia, who was a very successful businesswoman from Thyatira. Lydia became the first believer in Europe and the church was born. She apparently had a large home there in Philippi. I say that because she invited Paul and his three companions to stay in her house (**Acts 16:15**). Like many of the first century churches, the first church in Europe was a house church, which met in Lydia’s home.

The ministry in Europe was off to a smooth start in a short time, but that would all change. There was going to be opposition. The devil would try to discourage and even stop the church before it got too established and before it became very effective. We see that in **Acts 16:16-24**.

It didn't take Paul very long to get the business community and the local law enforcement upset. Preaching the gospel was not good for business, so they decided to rough Paul and Silas up a little bit. They beat them with rods and threw them into the inner prison (literally threw them) and put their feet on stocks (**Acts 16:22-24**). Having their feet in stocks was a very painful position. The stocks were made of adjustable wooden shackles with holes for securing a prisoners feet. They were usually used for the most hardened of criminals. This was where Paul and Silas would have the opportunity to reflect upon their ministry and the first public European response to the gospel. It was harsh.

Well, they reflected upon what happened all right. Notice their response and the Lord's response in **Acts 16:25-34**. About midnight they began *"praying and singing hymns of praise to God"* (**Acts 16:25**). Then, the Lord caused a *"great earthquake"* and *"all the doors were opened and everyone's chains were unfastened"* (**Acts 16:26**).

I admit, something has bothered me for many years. How can a man be beaten with rods, bleeding and bruised, put into a cold dark prison with no food and placed in stocks start singing praises to the Lord at midnight? It finally hit me. Paul was willing to give his life for the cause of Christ and the building up of the church. He looked beyond his circumstances and rejoiced in the fact that the church was born in Philippi. The seed was planted in Europe. The fire was lit. The Word of God and the gospel of Christ took route in Macedonia and *"the gates of Hades will not overpower it"* (**Matthew 16:18**). Because of the response to the gospel and the birth of the church in Philippi, Paul could sing hymns of praise to God. The cause of Christ, the preaching of the Word, the spreading of the gospel and the building up of the church was his priority, his focus, his passion and his greatest joy, just as it is with Jesus.

There is a movement spreading across our country like a wild fire. Some think it started in California. The movement is this: church is an option not a priority. Forty years ago the church was at the center of the community. Businesses were closed on Sunday. The kids sports teams did not practice or play on Sunday morning. Why? Because most of them were in church with their parents. The church was influencing the community rather than the community influencing the church.

In Yorba Linda, California, when the first liquor license became available Yorba Linda Friends Church bought the license, so there would be no alcohol sold in the city. Today we would never see something like happen. Somewhere along the line the church became complacent and irrelevant. The church is no longer at the center of most communities. It is an option not a priority.

Today, the church is in competition with many other influences and activities. It competes with community and professional sporting events. It competes with our obsession with recreation and entertainment. It competes with businesses trying to keep afloat. It competes with the MTV sound bite mentality. There are more and more people that have a thirst for constant action and activity rather than a desire to listen quietly to the leading of the Holy Spirit. The attention span of both children and adults has been shortened causing more and more people to conclude that church is boring. It is not the church that is boring, but rather peoples love for Jesus is growing

cold. As a result we see many churches developing a style of worship that is performance based, so they can attract and keep people in church.

I firmly believe that if there is going to be a revival in our country and in our communities, then the church needs to be a priority not an option. Because of the joy set before Jesus, He endured the cross. The joy that was set before Him was His church – the bride of Christ. It was the place where the Word of God would wash His people, so He could present the church before His Father holy and blameless. It was the place where His people would be equipped to serve one another and build up one another and build His kingdom. Jesus never intended the church to be an option, but rather a priority. The church is His joy.

Lydia put her business at risk by hosting the church in her home. For her, Jesus and His church was a priority, not an option. The jailer, a government employee, put his livelihood at risk by becoming a Christian, hosting Paul and Silas in his home and becoming a member of the church. To the jailer and his family, Jesus and His church was a priority, not an option. Paul suffered enormous hardships for the cause of Christ and the building up of His church. For Paul, the church was a priority, not an option. How about you, is Jesus and His church a priority, or one of your options? Jesus and His church ought to be our greatest joy, as it was with Paul.

THEME

The theme in the book of Philippians reflects Paul's joy for the church. The words joy or rejoice are used sixteen times in the book of Philippians. The key verse for the book is **Philippians 4:4**, *“Rejoice in the Lord always; again I will say rejoice.”* The book can be outlined around joy as its theme as follows:

- **Philippians 1:1-30**, Joy in Suffering.
- **Philippians 2:1-30**, Joy in Serving.
- **Philippians 3:1-4:1**, Joy in Believing.
- **Philippians 4:2-23**, Joy in Giving.

MESSAGE

The joy of the Lord that Paul experienced, even while in prison for his faith, was a result of people responding to his message. That message is found in **Acts 16:31**, as Paul spoke to the jailer from the dungeon in Philippi. Paul responded to the jailers question: *“What must I do to be saved?”* Paul said, *“Believe in the Lord Jesus, and you will be saved, you and your household.”* Have you responded to the message? Do you believe in the Lord Jesus? If so, then make sure Jesus and His church is a priority in your life. Don't let Jesus and His church be reduced to an option. We are told in **Hebrews 10:23-25**, *“Let us hold fast the confession of our hope without wavering, for He who promised is faithful; and let us consider how to stimulate one another to love and good deeds, not forsaking our own assembling together, as is the habit of some, but encourage one another; and all the more as you see the day drawing near.”*

CHAPTER TWO

PHILIPPIANS 1:1-2**SETTING AN EXAMPLE****Philippians 1:1-2**

“Paul and Timothy, bond-servants of Christ Jesus, to all the saints in Christ Jesus who are in Philippi, including the overseers and deacons: Grace to you and peace from God our Father and the Lord Jesus Christ.”

Paul, Silas, Timothy and Luke were the missionary team that was led by the Holy Spirit to the city of Philippi located in Macedonia. Lydia, the seller of purple fabric from Thyatira, was the first believer along with her household. The Roman jailer and his household quickly followed her and the church was born in Europe and met in the home of Lydia.

Several years later Paul was arrested for his faith and ended up in Rome under house arrest for two years. The Philippian church sent from their congregation a man by the name of Epaphroditus who delivered to Paul a very generous gift to take care of his needs. We see that in **Philippians 4:18** when Paul said, *“But I have received everything in full and have an abundance; I am amply supplied, having received from Epaphroditus what you have sent, a fragrant aroma, an acceptable sacrifice, well-pleasing to God.”* Paul had a very close relationship with the church at Philippi.

As a result of their generous gift, Paul sent them a thank you letter. As we read Philippians it becomes very evident that it is a letter sent from the joyful heart of Paul with the words *“joy”* or *“rejoice”* used 16 times in 4 chapters. In this letter Paul reveals his secret to maintaining his joy while in the midst of difficult circumstances and while dealing with difficult people. As a result, we gain tremendous insight into how to be filled with joy as we live our Christian lives applying the principles contained in Philippians.

There is something else I observe in this letter that is very significant. It is this: Paul walks the talk. He models Biblical principles for us to follow. In **Philippians 3:17** Paul said, *“Brethren, join in following my example, and observe those who walk according to the pattern you have in us.”* We are to follow Paul’s example as we walk with Christ. We are to become godly people watchers, observing and following the way other godly people walk as they apply Bibli-

cal principles. I try not to allow my life to be influenced by people who do not walk according to Biblical principles. **1 Corinthians 15:33** says, *“Do not be deceived: ‘Bad company corrupts good morals.’”* Hanging out with bad company is like putting on a pair of white gloves, picking up mud and mixing it around in your hands. The mud does not get white from the glove, but rather the glove gets muddy. In **Philippians 4:9**, Paul said, *“The things you have learned and received and heard and seen in me, practice these things, and the God of peace will be with you.”* Paul encourages us to apply what he himself has learned. Paul wants everyone to be doers of the Word not just hears of the Word. Paul wants us to take his teaching and what he has applied to his own life and apply it to ours. As we take our journey, verse by verse, through Philippians there is going to be rich applications.

BOND-SERVANTS

Paul began his letter by introducing himself and Timothy as *“bond-servants of Christ Jesus.”* He said, *“Paul and Timothy, bond-servants of Christ Jesus, to all the saints in Christ Jesus who are in Philippi, including the overseers and deacons: Grace to you and peace from God our Father and the Lord Jesus Christ.”*

The Greek word for *“bond-servant”* is *“doulos,”* which is usually translated in the New Testament as *“servant.”* It describes someone who is bought and owned by someone else. Paul uses the term to describe the believer’s relationship to Christ as those who are bought by Christ and those who voluntarily submit themselves to His ownership because they love Him. Bond-servants demonstrate their love for Jesus by submitting to Him as their Lord and by serving Him, doing His will.

The idea of a bond-servant is beautifully illustrated in the Old Testament, in **Exodus 21:5-6**. In that passage a slave was being set free by his master but instead the slave voluntarily puts himself under the lordship of his master for life. Notice what it says, *“But if the slave plainly says, ‘I love my master, my wife and my children; I will not go out as a free man,’ then his master shall bring him to God, then he shall bring him to the door or doorpost. And his master shall pierce his ear with an awl; and he shall serve him permanently.”* By Paul using the phrase *“bond-servants of Christ Jesus”* is indicating that he and Timothy were not servants of the church or of Rome or of any other person or institution, but exclusively servants of Jesus Christ for life. In addition, as an act of their own free will, they placed themselves under the Lordship of Christ because they loved Him.

Paul’s will had been mastered by the Master. Paul was a man whose heart was fully devoted to Christ. Like David, Paul was a man after God’s own heart. Paul was a man whose mind was renewed by the Word of God, which in turn transformed his mind with Christlike thinking (**Romans 12:2**). Paul took every thought captive in obedience to Christ (**2 Corinthians 10:5**). Paul humbled himself under the mighty hand of his Savior and Lord. Paul was setting the example as a bond-servant for others to follow in the book of Philippians.

Timothy was one of those who followed Paul’s example. As a result, he went from being Paul’s spiritual son, having been led to Christ by Paul, to being a fellow bond-servant of Christ with Paul. Timothy became an example for others to follow. In fact, Paul encouraged Timothy to be that example in **1 Timothy 4:12**. He said, *“Let no one look down on your youthfulness, but*

rather in speech, conduct, love, faith and purity, show yourself an example of those who believe.” Christian leaders are to be godly examples for others in the church to follow just like Paul and Timothy.

SAINTS

Paul introduced himself and Timothy as bond-servants, but called the church at Philippi, *“saints in Christ Jesus.”* The Greek word for *“saints”* means *“holy ones”* or *“set-apart ones.”* The term refers to everyone who is *“in Christ.”* It refers to everyone who by faith trusts Jesus Christ as their personal Savior and Lord. The term *“saint”* refers to every believer who has been baptized into the body of Christ by the Holy Spirit at the moment of salvation. It is not referring to a revered man-made position blessed by a certain church as a result of certain conduct or accomplishments in life. We are saints not by conduct, but by our position *“in Christ.”* As Dr. J. Vernon McGee once said, *“Either you are a saint or you aint.”*

Now having said that, the position of being a saint is a highly exalted position. Being holy and set apart by God for His purposes and for His glory is a high calling. I find it interesting that Paul referred to himself and Timothy (the founders of the church at Philippi) as bond-servants (a humbled position) but addressed the believers in the church as saints (an exalted position). I think Paul was setting the example for others to follow. He was walking the talk. In **Philippians 2:3** Paul said, *“Do nothing from selfishness or empty conceit, but with humility of mind regard one another as more important than yourselves.”* That was what Paul was doing when he called the church saints and himself a bond-servant. He considered the church more important than himself.

OVERSEERS AND DEACONS

In **Philippians 1:1** Paul also addressed his letter to the overseers and deacons of the church. The overseers were the pastors, bishops, elders and shepherds of the flock. Their role is described in **Acts 20:28**, which says, *“Be on guard for yourselves and for all the flock, among which the Holy Spirit has made you overseers, to shepherd the church of God which He purchased with His own blood.”* The overseers are the ones who have spiritual oversight of the church, preaching and teaching the Word of God and equipping the church for ministry.

The deacons are the Lord’s servants within the church who take care of the administrative duties, the facilities, the serving of food and the various miscellaneous tasks that must be done in order for the church to function. **Acts 6:1-6** describes some of these people. In **Acts 6:2-4** the apostles gave instruction to the church saying, *“It is not desirable for us to neglect the word of God in order to serve tables. Therefore, brethren, select from among you seven men of good reputation, full of the Spirit and of wisdom, whom we may put in charge of this task. But we will devote ourselves to prayer and to the ministry of the word.”*

Within the book of Philippians Paul gives Biblical principles that even the leaders of the church need to apply, because they too are to be examples. As Peter said in **1 Peter 5:1-3**, *“Therefore, I exhort the elders among you, as your fellow elder and witness of the sufferings of Christ, and a partaker also of the glory that is to be revealed, shepherd the flock of God*

among you, exercising oversight not under compulsion, but voluntarily, according to the will of God; and not for sordid gain, but with eagerness; nor yet as lording it over those allotted to your charge, but proving to be examples to the flock.”

In Philippians Paul established himself as an example for others to follow. Of course, our greatest example is Jesus. As Paul said in **1 Corinthians 11:1**, *“Be imitators of me just as I also am of Christ.”* The only way we can learn from Christ’s example is to diligently study the Word of God and then, by relying on the power of the Holy Spirit working in us, we are to apply what we learn. Jesus becomes our example even in the book of Philippians. As we are told in **Philippians 2:5**, *“Have this attitude in yourselves which was also in Christ Jesus.”* The ultimate goal of our study in Philippians is to be more Christlike. In order for us to become more Christlike, then we must follow the examples set by Jesus, Paul and other godly people. One of the results of following those examples is a life that is full of joy.

 CHAPTER THREE

PHILIPPIANS 1:3-8

GOD AT WORK

Philippians 1:3-8

“I thank my God in all my remembrance of you, always offering prayer with joy in my every prayer for you all, in view of your participation in the gospel from the first day until now. For I am confident of this very thing, that He who began a good work in you will perfect it until the day of Christ Jesus. For it is only right for me to feel this way about you all, because I have you in my heart, since both in my imprisonment and in the defense and confirmation of the gospel, you all are partakers of grace with me. For God is my witness, how I long for you all with the affection of Christ Jesus.”

Paul frequently gave thanks in his prayers for the churches. The church at Philippi was one of those churches. In **Philippians 1:3-8** Paul revealed the reasons behind his thankful and joyful prayers for this young church in Philippi.

Paul had a deep love for the Philippian church that became a partner with him in sharing the gospel. That partnership brought him joy in the midst of some very difficult circumstances. However, there is something else in this passage that grabbed my attention and that is very important to see. There are three things:

- God is always at work in and through our circumstances.
- God is always at work in and through His church.
- God is always at work in and through every Christian.

God has initiated a plan and there is nothing that will prevent Him from accomplishing what He has set out to do. As we look at **Philippians 1:3-8**, we see very clearly the hand of God quietly at work, yet in a mighty and powerful way.

IN AND THROUGH CIRCUMSTANCES

At the time Paul wrote his letter to the church at Philippi, he was imprisoned for his faith. He was under house arrest in Rome waiting for his trial to come before Caesar. There are several observations we should make to better understand his circumstances:

- He was in danger of losing his life.
- He was placed under house arrest, which allowed him to stay in his own rented quarters. However, he had no means by which to earn money to pay for his rent or to buy food.
- He was in chains (**Acts 28:20**) probably having his feet and hands bound.
- He was guarded by a member of the Roman Praetorian Guard 24-hours a day, seven days a week for two full years.
- He only had the clothes that he wore. There was no laundry service.
- He had no way to stay warm except for the blankets his friends gave him.
- He had no light except for the candles his friends would bring.
- He sat on a hard dirt floor, or at best, a hard cold stone floor.
- He had no privacy. His every move was watched. His every word was heard. His every emotion was observed.

Paul's situation seemed hopeless. For many Christians, to hear that the apostle was in prison and could be executed for his faith would cause them to be fearful and to become closet Christians. It looked as though Paul's missionary work had ended. Yet God was at work in and through Paul's circumstances.

During those two years of imprisonment, Paul was able to share the gospel with the Jewish leaders in Rome (**Acts 28:17-29**). The entire Roman Praetorian Guard heard the gospel (**Philippians 1:13**). Many Christians gained the courage to speak more boldly the Word of God (**Philippians 1:15**). He led the runaway slave Onesimus and others to the Lord. God gave Paul the time to write Philemon, Colossians, Ephesians and Philippians. He had an extended uninterrupted time of prayer for all the churches. God was at work in and through Paul's circumstances. As Paul wrote in **Romans 8:28**, ***“And we know that God causes all things to work together for good to those who love God, to those who are called according to His purpose.”***

Have you ever noticed that sometimes our circumstances prevent us from seeing God's hand at work? Circumstances can cloud our vision. We get so intent on looking at the circumstance that we cannot see God at work.

When I worked in downtown Los Angeles another man and I took turns teaching a lunchtime Bible study in one of the high-rise buildings. During the months that we taught that Bible study the company we worked for started to go through some very lean times. Many people were being laid off. The people who came to the Bible study stopped coming so they could use their lunch hours to look for other employment.

My friend and I were very discouraged. We were about to cancel the Bible study so we could start looking for other employment ourselves when I walked a young man. This young man told us that he just received notice that he was laid off and that his wife was expecting to give birth to their first child any day. He was scared and distraught and didn't know where to turn. He admitted that he never came to the Bible study because he was concerned about what his friends would say. He told us he no longer was concerned about them and asked us to pray for him. We agreed. After we finished praying he asked us to tell him more about our faith. By the end of that Bible study this young man prayed to receive Christ as his Savior and Lord.

We almost blew it. Circumstances had clouded our vision. We couldn't see that God was working in those circumstances. If that young man's wife had not been ready to give birth, and if he had not been laid off, and if we had cancelled the Bible study to take care of our own employment concerns, that young man would not have entered the kingdom of God that day.

I think there is a very important lesson for us to learn from Paul's example and that is: Paul never looked at Christ through his circumstance, but rather Paul looked at his circumstances through Christ. For example:

- Paul did not consider himself to be a prisoner of Rome, but rather a prisoner of Christ.
- He never considered himself chained to a Roman soldier, but rather he saw it as having a captive audience for the gospel.
- He did not see his imprisonment as a detriment to the gospel, but rather as a greater progress for the gospel (**Philippians 1:12**).

Paul understood, as we should, God is always at work in and through our circumstances.

We need to look at our circumstances through Christ – from His perspective. The question is how do we do that? Here is a suggestion that I have found helpful. Don't ask the Lord why you are going through what you are going through, but rather ask the Lord what He wants to accomplish in you and through you while you are going through it. Don't look at Christ through your circumstances, but rather look at your circumstances through Christ. God is at work in and through circumstances.

IN AND THROUGH CHURCHES

Another way that God works is in and through His church to accomplish His purpose of reconciling people to Himself. If the church is truly under the Lordship of Christ and if Christ is truly the head of the church, then God will use that church. He will use that church to participate in the gospel, just as He did with the church at Philippi. Participating in the gospel includes telling and teaching people the entire scope regarding the person and work and teachings of Jesus Christ. It involves sharing our faith (evangelism) and equipping the saints (discipleship) for the work of ministry. It means preaching the gospel and the Word of God so the Spirit of God can take the Word of God and wash us and transform us into the people of God.

I don't know how the Philippian church found out about Paul's needs while he was imprisoned at Rome. Somehow they found out and took action. Paul prayed for them and I am sure they prayed for Paul. However, they did more. They took a sacrificial offering and sent it to Paul. It abundantly took care of Paul's financial and physical needs (**Philippians 4:18**). However, they did more. They sent Epaphroditus to not only deliver their gift, but also to help Paul proclaim and defend the gospel. According to **Philippians 1:7**, the church not only helped Paul in his imprisonment but also *"in the defense and confirmation of the gospel."* In **Philippians 2:25**, Paul referred to Epaphroditus as his *"brother and fellow worker and fellow soldier, who is also your messenger and minister to my need."*

Paul had abundant reason to give thanks, with joy in his heart, for the Philippian church. They were partners with Paul in the gospel. In **Philippians 1:5** Paul said they were participating *"in the gospel from the first day until now."* This church from its conception put their faith into

shoe leather. They were partners with Paul from the moment Lydia became a believer to the time Paul wrote this letter. God works in and through the church.

IN AND THROUGH CHRISTIANS

There is something else in this passage that brings joy to my own heart. Paul said in **Verse 6**, ***“For I am confident of this very thing, that He who began a good work in you will perfect it until the day of Christ Jesus.”*** God is always at work in and through Christians. There is a three-fold method that God uses as He works in our lives:

- The work God does for us – that is called redemption (**John 3:16**, **Acts 16:31**).
- The work God does in us – that is called sanctification. God sets us apart and prepares us for His use. God changes us from the inside out, transforming us and equipping us by His indwelling Holy Spirit through His Word (**2 Timothy 3:16-17**).
- The work God does through us – that is called service. We are to use our spiritual gifts relying on the power of His Holy Spirit to serve Him and bring glory to Him (1 Peter 4:10-11).

God has a plan and purpose for our lives and that purpose extends beyond our earthly existence to include our eternal position with Jesus and our service to Him. In **Ephesians 2:10** we are told that ***“...we are His workmanship, created in Christ Jesus for good works, which God prepared beforehand so that we would walk in them.”***

God started His work in us the day we put our faith in Jesus and He we will continue to perfect that work until Christ returns. Unfortunately, some of us resist His working in our lives. We go kicking and complaining. Paul said in **Philippians 2:13-14**, ***“for it is God who is at work in you, both to will and to work for His good pleasure. Do all things without grumbling or disputing.”***

Keep this in mind: God is the Potter and we are the clay in His hands being shaped into vessels of honor. God is at work in and through our circumstances using them as tools to shape us for His use. He is working in and through His church, using His people in His church as instruments to accomplish His purposes. And, He is at work in and through every one of us by His Spirit through His Word to perfect us for His Glory. We are His workmanship. We are the Master’s painting. We are His beautiful poem. We are The Bride of Christ. God is at work and we are to be at work for His glory.

CHAPTER FOUR

PHILIPPIANS 1:9-11**ELEMENTS OF SPIRITUAL GROWTH****Philippians 1:9-11**

“And this I pray, that your love may abound more and more in real knowledge and all discernment, so that you may approve the things that are excellent, in order to be sincere and blameless until the day of Christ; having been filled with the fruit of righteousness which comes through Jesus Christ, to the glory and praise of God.”

In the opening verses of Philippians, Paul expressed his joy for a church that participated with him in the gospel. He also expressed his confidence in the Philippian saints as well as his confidence in God. Paul said in **Philippians 1:6**, *“For I am confident of this very thing, that He who began a good work in you will perfect it until the day of Christ Jesus.”* Paul had good reasons to express his confidence. This church was highly motivated and committed to doing God’s will in both word and in deed.

Paul then expressed his prayer for the Philippians saints in **Philippians 1:9-11**. In doing so, Paul revealed five key elements of Christian growth. Five elements that are part of the ongoing good work that God is perfecting in each of us.

Paul had a passion to see Christians grow in their faith. He expressed that passion in his prayers, his teaching, preaching and writing. He rarely focused on physical issues or upon himself. His primary focus was on spiritual issues and the spiritual well being of others. Paul rightly understood what Jesus meant when He said in **Matthew 6:33**, *“But seek first His kingdom and His righteousness, and all these things will be added to you.”* Paul continues to be an example for us to follow. Paul focused on the kingdom of God and upon spiritual needs, even while in prison. The Holy Spirit worked through Paul to reveal what those spiritual needs were as he wrote his letters to the churches. By-the-way, God took care of his physical needs just as He promised.

Here in Philippians, five spiritual needs are revealed that are essential to Christian growth: love, excellence, integrity, good works and glorifying God. Each of these elements of Christian

growth builds upon the other. Abounding love produces spiritual excellence, which produces personal integrity, which produces genuine good works, which all glorify God.

LOVE

The first thing Paul prayed for was that love would *“abound still more and more.”* The Greek word that Paul uses in this passage for *“love”* is *“agape.”* It is defined in **1 Corinthians 13:4-8a**. It is the highest possible form of love, because God is love, He is *“agape.”* As we are told in **1 John 4:16**, *“We have come to know and have believed the love which God has for us. God is love, and the one who abides in love abides in God, and God abides in him.”* God gives this love to every believer by His indwelling Holy Spirit so we can express His love to others. In **Romans 5:5** we are told, *“...hope does not disappoint, because the love of God has been poured out within our hearts through the Holy Spirit who was given to us.”* In **1 John 4:7** we are told, *“Beloved, let us love one another, for love is from God; and everyone who loves is born of God and knows God.”* Love is one of the fruits of God’s Spirit working in us and through us according to **Galatians 5:22-23**. That love, which is given to us and powered by the Holy Spirit can abound more and more in each of our lives.

The love that we express to others is an act of our will relying upon the power of God’s Spirit working through us in obedience to our Lord’s command to love in **John 13:34**. Love is not based upon the merit or physical attraction of those who receive it, nor is it the result of our emotions or sentiment. We love out of obedience to the One who first loved us. He has given us a new commandment to love as He loves us. We are to follow His example.

Paul wrote his prayer request in the “present tense” indicating that our God given Christian love is to continue growing and abounding throughout our lives. The Philippians already loved, so Paul prayed that their love would overflow in great abundance.

God’s love for us, our love for God and our love for one another is one of the key elements to Biblical Christianity. It is the glue that holds us together in perfect unity according to **Colossians 3:14**. It is the essential ingredient upon which our Christian growth depends. Paul said in **1 Corinthians 13:13**, *“But now faith, hope, love, abide these three; but the greatest of these is love.”*

Paul prayed that love would *“abound still more and more in real knowledge.”* The Greek word used for knowledge is *“epignosis,”* which refers to a full knowledge or understanding acquired by learning and experiencing truth. In other words, we learn to grow in our love by growing in our understanding of God and His Word. We also grow in our love by experiencing God’s love in our own lives. Abounding more and more in the real knowledge about love is not just accumulating spiritual information. It is also the Spirit led application of that knowledge. We are to put into practice “agape,” Christlike love, in a way that represents Jesus Christ and affects the lives of people in a positive way.

Therefore, Paul said that our love should *“abound still more and more in real knowledge and all discernment.”* Discernment is the God given wisdom to properly apply Biblical knowledge. We are to put love into practice. The best way to do that is by following our Lord’s example and His teaching. God given Christian love is to be given away. We are to love as Jesus would love if He were here today.

EXCELLENCE

In **verse 10**, Paul followed his desire for the churches love to abound in real knowledge and discernment with the statement, “...*so that you may approve the things that are excellent.*” “*The things that are excellent*” refers to qualities that make us outstanding individuals for God. The phrase “*so that*” indicates that when our love is growing in the knowledge of God’s Word and God Himself it gives us the ability to discern whether we are pursuing things that are excellent. In the context of this passage the word “*approve*” means to examine, study, and investigate the Word of God to discern excellent things, such as: truth, right attitudes, right motives, pure thoughts, words and actions, including knowing the will of God. Paul’s prayer, his exhortation, his expectation for the church and each individual believer in the church is this: We are to seek after the things that are excellent. We are to exemplify those qualities in life by making them an integral part of our life in a way that brings glory and praise to God.

INTEGRITY

Paul went on in **verse 10** to say that we are to “*approve the things that are excellent, in order to be sincere and blameless until the day of Christ.*” Being sincere and blameless refers to our integrity.

The phrase “*in order to be*” indicates a continued progression. Spiritual integrity builds on spiritual excellence just as spiritual excellence builds on godly love. Without spiritual integrity there is deception.

The word “*sincere*” refers to honesty or integrity. It literally means “*judge by sunlight.*” In ancient Rome fine pottery was relatively thin and fragile and often developed cracks when placed in the furnace. The unethical potters would fill the cracks with a wax, which would be concealed when the object was painted. However, when the pottery was filled with something hot the wax would melt revealing its flaws. In ordinary light the cracks could be concealed, but when the pottery was held up to sunlight the cracks were clearly exposed. Reputable dealers would often stamp their products “*sine cera*” as a guarantee of high quality.

Our lives, as we live for Jesus, should be held up to the light of God’s Word. Our lives, as we live for Jesus, are to be “*sine cera*” for the glory of God. We are to have lives that are ethically pure, honest, full of integrity. Far too many Christians are not “*sine cera*” in their walk with Jesus.

The word “*blameless*” in **verse 10** expresses the quality of our integrity. It literally means “*without stumbling or offense.*” In other words, we should not stumble, nor should we cause others to stumble as a result of our actions. Our behavior should not be offensive to someone else. We are to be full of integrity, sincere and blameless. We should follow Paul’s example. In **Acts 24:16** Paul said, “*In view of this, I also do my very best to maintain always a blameless conscience both before God and before men.*” As believers we are to be honest, men and women of integrity. We are to do what we say and say what we do until Jesus takes us home. Why is that important? It is because people watch our behavior. It is because our integrity or lack of integrity may determine if a nonbeliever puts their faith in Christ. People today are fed up with hypocrites.

GOOD WORKS

Without integrity in our lives God cannot perfect in us His good works or the *“fruit of righteousness.”* The progression continues in Paul’s prayer. Godly love produces spiritual excellence, which produces integrity, which produces good works or the fruit of righteousness.

In **verse 11** Paul said, *“having been filled with the fruit of righteousness which comes through Jesus Christ.”* The phrase *“having been filled”* translates a perfect passive participle in the Greek text referring to something that happened in the past and has continuing results. In other words, the fruit of righteousness comes through Jesus Christ as a result of our faith in Christ. When we put our faith in Jesus Christ we were given His righteousness. We were given the ability under the power of His Holy Spirit to do what is right in God’s sight. That is righteousness. The fruit of righteousness is how God’s righteousness is expressed in our lives, for others to see, as we abide in Christ (**John 15:4-5**). It is the result of our faith in Christ. There are several *“fruits of righteousness”* identified in God’s Word. For example:

- Bringing people to faith in Christ is fruit (**Romans 1:13**).
- There is the fruit of the Spirit (**Galatians 5:22-23**).
- There is the fruit of our lips praising and giving thanks to God (**Hebrews 13:15**).

The fruit of righteousness is not produced solely on our own effort. It is produced by the Holy Spirit when we abide in a loving relationship with Christ, walking obediently and faithfully with Him according to His Word (**John 15:7-17**).

GLORIFYING GOD

In **John 15:8** Jesus said, *“My Father is glorified by this, that you bear much fruit, and prove to be My disciples.”* Our good works, our fruit of righteousness, our integrity, our spiritual excellence, and our growing love all bring glory and praise to God. That is the ultimate goal of Paul’s prayer and it is to be the ultimate goal for all that we do, say and think. It is all *“to the glory and praise of God.”* As we are told in **1 Corinthians 10:31**, *“Whether, then, you eat or drink or whatever you do, do all to the glory of God.”*

John MacArthur put it this way: *“His glory is the sum of all His perfection’s and the honor for being who He is and doing what He has done, and His praise is the affirmation of that glory by those who recognize it.”* (Taken from *The MacArthur New Testament Commentary Philippians*, page 54, © Copyright 2001 by John MacArthur, Jr. Published by Moody Press, Chicago Illinois. Used by permission of the publisher. All rights reserves.) May we be a people who continue to grow spiritually, a people who do all things to the glory and praise of God! May we be *“sine cera”* for Jesus.

CHAPTER FIVE

PHILIPPIANS 1:12-14**OPPOSITION LED TO OPPORTUNITY****Philippians 1:12-14**

“Now I want you to know, brethren, that my circumstances have turned out for a greater progress of the gospel, so that my imprisonment in the cause of Christ has become well known throughout the whole praetorian guard and to everyone else, and that most of the brethren, trusting in the Lord because of my imprisonment, have far more courage to speak the word of God without fear.”

In **Philippians 1:12-14**, we see the sovereign hand of God at work in the life of Paul turning circumstances and opposition into opportunities for the gospel. Paul’s journey to Rome was difficult. It was filled with opposition. I am sure he wanted to go to Rome as a preacher but instead he went as a prisoner. However, God took the opposition that Paul faced and turned it into a greater opportunity for the gospel.

Paul’s journey to Rome is well documented, starting with **Acts 21:17** and going through **Acts 28:31**. The opposition that Paul faced, which eventually led him to Rome began in Jerusalem. I am going to summarize the events that took place so we can see how God turns circumstances and opposition into greater opportunities for the gospel. It was a reoccurring pattern in the life of Paul, and a method that God still uses today in the lives of those who are fully committed to Him.

Paul was in Jerusalem and in the temple when Jews, visiting from Asia, stirred up the Jews in Jerusalem in opposition to Paul. They claimed he preached against the Jewish people and against the Law and brought a Greek into the temple. All the Jewish people were seeking to kill Paul and started beating him. The Roman governing authorities stepped in to stop the beating and arrested Paul. Paul then asked the Roman authorities if he could speak to the Jewish people. Permission was granted and Paul shared his testimony in how he came to know Jesus as His Lord and Savior (**Acts 21:17-22:21**). The Lord took Paul’s circumstances and the opposition to Paul’s faith and turned it into a greater opportunity for the gospel.

On the next day the Roman authorities, after discovering that Paul was a Roman citizen, decided they better find out why he was accused and beaten by the Jewish people. So they put him in chains and took him to the highest Jewish authorities. They took him before the chief priests, the high priest and the Sanhedrin Council for a hearing. During that hearing Paul gave witness to his belief in the resurrection of the dead and the opposition increased. That night the Lord spoke to Paul (**Acts 23:11**) and said, ***“Take courage; for as you have solemnly witnessed to My cause at Jerusalem, so you must witness at Rome also.”*** God was going to take Paul’s circumstances and the opposition that Paul was facing and turn it into a greater opportunity for the gospel.

The next day about forty Jews took an oath. They decided not to eat or drink until they killed Paul. Therefore, the Roman authorities in Jerusalem decided to take Paul to Caesarea where he would have a hearing before Felix, the Roman governor in the region.

The high priest Ananias, along with some elders and an attorney named Tertullus, came from Jerusalem and brought charges against Paul before Felix. After listening to their accusations, Felix asked Paul to speak. Paul again gave testimony of his faith. When he was finished, Felix decided to keep him in jail. After several days, Felix asked Paul to speak about his faith to himself and his wife Drusilla. God took Paul’s circumstances and the opposition to Paul’s faith and turned it into an opportunity for Felix and his wife to hear the gospel.

However, the opposition continued. Felix kept Paul in prison in Caesarea for two full years. Eventually, Felix was replaced by Porcius Festus. While imprisoned at Caesarea Paul had opportunity to share Christ with several Roman leaders including Felix, Drusilla, Festus and even king Agrippa. God took Paul’s circumstances and the opposition to Paul’s faith and turned it into a greater opportunity for the gospel.

Paul was then placed on a ship to go to Roman so he could stand trial before Caesar. As one might expect by now, the opposition continued. The journey would take about eight months. They went through violent storms during the winter months at which time Paul prophesied to the sailors that the ship would run aground, but no life would be lost (**Acts 27:22-26**).

After the shipwreck a viper bit Paul. Some thought he was getting his just judgement for his crimes and would die quickly. However, no harm came to Paul. The leading man of the island where Paul was shipwrecked was named Publius. His father was lying in bed and about to die when Paul prayed for him and he was healed. The people of the island that had various illnesses were coming to Paul and getting cured. This went on for three months. God took Paul’s circumstances and the opposition to Paul’s faith and turned it into a greater opportunity for the gospel.

WITH SOLDIERS OF CAESAR

When Paul arrived in Rome he was placed under house arrest for two years and chained to a member of the Praetorian Guard. The chain was about eighteen inches long. One end of the chain was attached to Paul’s wrist and the other end to the wrist of the Praetorian Guard.

In **Philippians 1:12** Paul said, ***“...my circumstances have turned out for the greater progress of the gospel.”*** The term ***“progress”*** in the Greek is a military term, ***“prokopē”*** (***“pro”*** means ***“forward”*** and ***“kopē”*** means ***“to cut”***). The term was used by the Roman military leaders who plotted and executed a plan to invade a new territory. They moved forward with a plan to cut into a new territory. What Paul indicated by using the Greek word ***“prokopē”*** was this; with

the Lord's help he planned how he would invade this new territory with the gospel. He intentionally figured out a way that would enable him to move forward and cut into the Praetorian Guard with the gospel.

The question is: How did Paul do that while chained to a soldier twenty-four hours a day seven days a week for two years? We are not told specifically, but I'll give you some of my thoughts:

- I don't think Paul prayed silently. I think he prayed out loud so the Praetorian Guard chained to his wrist would hear the gospel.
- I don't think Paul made melody in his heart. I think Paul sang hymns and psalms and spiritual songs out loud as a means by which he could share the gospel, just like he did when he was jailed in Philippi.
- Paul did not write his own letters, but rather dictated his letters for someone else to write.

These elite and influential soldiers heard the truth, the very Word of God, the gospel of our Lord Jesus Christ whether they wanted to or not. Paul had a captured audience. Paul looked for ways to turn his circumstances and his opposition into a greater opportunity for the gospel.

The individual guards would be rotated every four to six hours. The soldiers not only heard Paul dictate letters. They also heard Paul teach and preach the gospel to those who visited him. They would see first hand his graciousness, his patience and perseverance, his wisdom, his deep convictions, his genuineness, his humility and his Christlike love. People need to see that today.

Paul said in **Philippians 1:13**, *"...my imprisonment in the cause of Christ has become well known throughout the whole Praetorian Guard and everyone else."* The Praetorian Guard consisted of 9000 highly trained and highly loyal personal soldier of Caesar. Over the two year period of Paul's imprisonment they all became acquainted with Paul and they all heard about Jesus. I am sure they talked about it in the barracks. I am sure many put their faith in Christ. God took Paul's circumstances and the opposition to Paul's faith and turned it into a greater opportunity for the gospel.

O, how the church needs to *"prokopē"* today. We need to find ways to make forward progress with the gospel. We need to plan and strategize how we are going to move the gospel forward cutting into our communities, our workplaces, our government and around the world. We need to allow the Lord, by the power of His Holy Spirit, to take our circumstances and yes even our opposition and turn it into a greater opportunity for the gospel.

When I worked in down town Los Angeles myself and another man wanted to be more active in sharing Christ in our workplace. We sat down and worked up a plan and then executed that plan. We decided not to share Christ during working hours. We did not want to rob the company of the time they were paying us to do our jobs. We decided to be model employees. We knew everyone would be watching us. We decided to take turns teaching the Bible study on our lunch hour. We also decided that before we used company property like a conference room we would get permission.

The time came to implement the plan after much prayer. The first person we asked to get permission to use the companies conference room said no. We then asked if he would mind if we discussed the matter with his boss. He gave us his permission, but said his boss would say no and sure enough his boss also said no. We then asked permission to talk to the General Manager of the office who was the boss over these two men. Before we could make an appointment to talk

with the General Manager his secretary called me and asked me to drop whatever I was doing and meet with him in his office. When I arrived, he initiated the conversation by saying, *“I understand you want to teach a Bible study on company property on your lunch hour.”* I said, *“Yes sir that is correct.”* He asked a few more questions which allowed me to share the gospel with him at which point he said we could move forward on three conditions:

- We would teach the Bible only.
- We would tell the people about Jesus.
- And, we would advertise the Bible study on every bulletin board within the company.

God took our initial opposition and turned it into a greater opportunity for the gospel.

WITH EVERYONE ELSE

Paul also said in **Philippians 1:13** that the cause of Christ was well know throughout the Praetorian Guard and *“everyone else.”* Who was everyone else?

In **Acts 28:17-29** we find that Paul had only been in Rome three days when he called for the leading men of the Jews. A great number of Jews came to Paul to hear him plead his case and give testimony for Christ. Some we are told were persuaded.

In **Philippians 4:22** Paul mentions the saints *“especially those of Caesar’s household.”* Apparently, some of the employees in the emperor’s palace put their trust in Jesus Christ as their personal Savior and Lord.

In **Acts 28:30-31** we are told, *“And he stayed two full years in his own rented quarters and was welcoming all who came to him, preaching the kingdom of God and teaching concerning the Lord Jesus Christ with all openness, unhindered.”* Paul’s imprisonment became his pulpit. He purposely looked for opportunities to tell others about Jesus and to share the Word of God.

Chuck Swindoll once said there are four things that will never come back: *“the spoken word, the spent arrow, time past and the neglected opportunity.”* How about you today, are you looking for opportunities to be a witness for Christ? Are you willing to allow God to take your circumstances, your opposition no matter how difficult and turn them into a greater opportunity for the gospel? O, how we need to look at our circumstances through Christ today.

WITH SOLDIERS OF CHRIST

In **verse 14** Paul said, *“most of the brethren, trusting in the Lord because of my imprisonment, have far more courage to speak the word of God without fear.”* Believers saw God’s provision and protection of Paul and they were encouraged. Believers saw the open door for the Word of God and basically said, *“If Paul can do it while in chains, then we can do it while walking free.”* The same God that used Moses’ staff, Gideon’s pitcher and David’s sling used Paul’s chains to accomplish His purposes. Paul’s enthusiasm generated more enthusiasm. Paul’s boldness generated more boldness. Paul’s faithfulness generated more faithfulness with other Christians.

Paul saw his circumstances as God given opportunities to be a witness for Jesus. He saw his imprisonment as the divine sovereign will of God, just like Joseph in the Old Testament, who was sold into slavery by his brothers and ended up spending thirteen years in prison for a crime he never committed. Joseph said to his brothers in **Genesis 50:20**, *“As for you, you meant evil*

against me, but God meant it for good in order to bring about this present result, to preserve many people alive.”

We should not get discouraged when our circumstances don't turn out the way we want them too. We should not get distracted from Christ's commission because of the opposition we face. We should look at the big picture and realize God is still working with eternity in mind. He is not finished with us yet. Paul rejoiced in what God was doing, rather than complaining about what God was not doing.

I can remember receiving a notice to report for jury duty. I did not want to go to jury duty, but the alternatives were less appealing. So you know what I did? I went to jury duty with a rotten attitude. I was complaining and griping all the way. I couldn't see the sovereign hand of God working for the life of me.

As I sat in the jury room I decided to start reading my Bible and jotting down some impressions. A man who sat at the desk next to me initiated a conversation. In a short time we discovered we were both believers working for the same company. He was in charge of security for our executives as they traveled internationally and was about to leave on an extended trip. He was also the president of the Bible club in the office where over 120 people met at lunchtime for Bible studies. He was concerned that the Bible club would not have any leadership during the months that he would be gone. Before the day was over I had agreed to become the next president of that Bible club. He could not put any more time into that Bible club, but I could. Over the next year the Lord opened many doors for the gospel as we invited several evangelistic speakers to come during lunchtime to share their stories. God used jury duty to bring the two of us together for the greater progress of the gospel.

I would like to share with you a lesson that I have learned the hard way. Keep your eyes open for opportunities to be a witness for Christ. Keep your mind washed by the Word of God and your heart tender to the leading of the Holy Spirit and expect the unexpected. God will take our circumstances and the opposition we face and turn them into an opportunity for the gospel and into an opportunity to minister the Word of God if we walk faithfully with Him. As Paul said in **Romans 8:28**, *“And we know that God causes all things to work together for the good to those who love God, to those who are called according to His purpose.”* God is still in charge and at work in your life – don't miss the opportunity! Look for opportunities to tell others about Jesus.

CHAPTER SIX

PHILIPPIANS 1:15-18**THE PREACHING OF CHRIST****Philippians 1:15-18**

“Some, to be sure, are preaching Christ even from envy and strife, but some also from goodwill; the later do it out of love, knowing that I am appointed for the defense of the gospel; the former proclaim Christ out of selfish ambition rather than from pure motives, thinking to cause me distress in my imprisonment. What then? Only that in every way, whether in pretense or in truth, Christ is proclaimed; and in this I rejoice.”

So far, the opposition that Paul faced was from those outside the faith. Now, in **Philippians 1:15-18**, we see that Paul faced a different kind of opposition. There were some Christians in Rome who preached Christ, but in the process they tried to bring Paul more trouble while he was in chains for Christ. We see Paul’s reaction to those Christians. As we do, we see another example for us to follow. We see how to react when our brothers and sisters in Christ mistreat us yet they are actively involved serving Christ by preaching the gospel.

Have you ever met another Christian who seems to be determined to make your life miserable? Unfortunately, most of us have. I have run into a few over the course of my Christian life. There are some Christians because of selfish ambition try to push other Christians out of their way so they can reach higher goals and personal recognition. They want to make a name for themselves. They want to be in the spotlight. Some try, unjustly, to ruin another Christian’s reputation by spreading rumors or gossiping. Some try to prevent other Christians from serving Christ by undermining their credibility or ability to minister. Some deny the power of God’s Spirit and the will of God at work in our lives. The thing is, we expect to some degree that kind of treatment from someone that is opposed to the gospel, or from people who do not know any better. We really don’t expect it from fellow Christians who are also committed to preaching Christ. Therefore, when other Christians mistreats us, it hurts. It cuts to the core of our being.

Paul ran into those kinds of people. As a result, Paul revealed the wrong way, the wrong reason and the wrong attitudes to have when sharing the gospel. Paul also revealed the right way, the right reasons and the right attitudes to have in sharing the gospel. Then, he tells us what he

did about those who used wrong methods to share Christ and what his attitude was in the whole matter. Paul demonstrated how he maintained his joy and did not become distressed. He again set an example for us to follow.

Keep in mind that every Christian is an ambassador for Christ. Every one of us has been given the ministry of reconciliation and the word of reconciliation in order to reconcile people to God through Christ. In **2 Corinthians 5:17-20** we are told, *“Therefore if anyone is in Christ, he is a new creature; the old things passed away; behold, new things have come. Now all these things are from God, who reconciled us to Himself through Christ and gave us the ministry of reconciliation, namely, that God was in Christ reconciling the world to Himself, not counting their trespasses against them, and He has committed to us the word of reconciliation. Therefore, we are ambassadors for Christ, as though God were making an appeal through us; we beg you on behalf of Christ be reconciled to God. He made Him who knew no sin to be sin on our behalf, so that we might become the righteousness of God in Him.”* Therefore, we all need to hear what Paul said. It is very important that every one of us who desire to bring glory and praise to God be ambassadors for Christ with the right attitudes, for the right reasons using the right methods.

THE WRONG METHOD

When talking about the wrong method and motives used in sharing Christ with others, Paul revealed four things. Some shared Christ (some still do today) from envy and strife, and for selfish ambitions and in pretense.

In **verse 15** Paul said, *“Some to be sure, are preaching Christ even from envy and strife.”* Envy and strife are the opposite of love and unity. Envy is a resentful awareness of the prominent position enjoyed by another and includes a strong desire to deprive that person of their prominent position. Envy is sneaky and subtle.

Strife on the other hand is not so subtle. The Greek word used here for *“strife”* is *“eris,”* which means *“to stir up”* by causing contention or debate. Strife is making harmful insinuations about someone and then arguing about it. Strife tries to belittle another person through ridicule or sarcasm. Strife says, *“I don’t think much about you, but I sure think a lot about me.”*

There were some Christian preachers there in Rome who didn’t like Paul getting all the attention. They didn’t like Paul cutting into their territory. Until Paul arrived they were the great preachers of Christ getting all the attention, now the great apostle had arrived and people were listening to Paul, even while he was imprisoned preaching the Word of God. They became envious and began causing strife.

Paul also said they were *“proclaiming Christ out of selfish ambition”* in **verse 17**. Some of the preachers of the gospel in Rome were looking out for their own self-interest. They were building a name for themselves. They were promoting their own reputations. They were concerned about their own prestige. They wanted all the recognition for the impact of Christ in Rome. Perhaps they were building their own gospel empire. They pursued their selfish ambitions, no matter how many people got hurt in the process, including Paul. They needed to hear the words of Paul as he was led by the Holy Spirit to write **Philippians 2:3-4**. *“Do nothing from selfishness or empty conceit, but with humility of mind regard one another as more important*

than yourselves; do not merely look out for your own personal interests, but also for the interests of others.”

People who minister the gospel and preach the Word of God out of selfish ambitions have stepped out on a very slippery slope. Their ministry has become all about them rather than all about Jesus! They have stopped bringing glory and praise to God and started seeking their own praise and glory. We would all do well to keep Paul’s words in mind when he said in **Philippians 2:5-8**, *“Have this attitude in yourselves which was also in Christ Jesus, who...emptied Himself...He humbled Himself.”* We need to get the “self” out of serving Christ. We are ambassadors for Christ, ministers of the gospel and preachers of the Word of God because we love Jesus and we love those who are on a plight of condemnation unless they be reconciled to God through Christ.

Some of the preachers of the gospel in Rome did not have pure motives. They were not sincere. They preached in pretense. They wanted people to think they were doing it for Jesus when they were really doing it for what they got out of it.

THE RIGHT METHOD

Paul also gave us the right method to use and the right motives to have in sharing Christ. According to **verse 15**, there were some, in Rome, that proclaimed Christ *“from good will,”* just as we should. The Greek word used here is *“eudokia,”* which means *“to be well-pleased,”* or *“to think it good.”* When we do things from good will we desire what is best for others. When we share Christ with others we are giving them the best and they are the recipients of the best, the grace and love of God.

When the angel announced the birth of Christ to the shepherds he used the same Greek word in **Luke 2:14**. When Jesus referred to the kingdom of God in **Luke 12:32** He used the same Greek word. Here in **Philippians 1:15**, as Paul refers to preaching Christ the same word is used. The point is this, when we tell people about Jesus and God’s forgiveness of sin through Christ and talk about His eternal kingdom, we are offering them the very best they could ever receive. When we tell others about Jesus *“from good will”* the focus is not on ourselves and what we get out of it, but rather on Jesus and what others get out of it – forgiveness of sin, reconciliation with God, eternal life and eternal fellowship with the Most High.

In **verse 16**, Paul also said that those who preach Christ out of good will *“do it out of love”*. Every one of us, as ambassadors for Christ, are to share Christ and the Word of God because we love Jesus, the church, the individuals in the church and those outside the church. We should give whatever time we can to sharing Christ and the Word of God, and to the building up of His church for the work of ministry. In addition, we are to do it out of love for Jesus, and with the desire to bring glory and praise to God.

It is important to point out that not all the Christians in Rome ministered with wrong motives. Paul noted that some of the Christians and probably the majority of Christians proclaimed Christ *“from pure motives”* in **verse 17**. They did not minister the gospel and the Word of God for personal gain. In **verse 18**, Paul used the phrase *“in truth.”* They preached Christ *“in truth.”* This is not referring to the accuracy of what was said because both types of Christians preached truth

accurately. There was no heresy in what was being taught only wrong methods and motives. The preaching of Christ *“in truth”* refers to the truthfulness and integrity of their heart.

When we share Christ with others from good will, out of love, with pure motives and in truth, then we bring all the glory and praise to God.

THE ONLY MESSAGE

What then was Paul’s response to those who preached Christ using the wrong methods and motives? Should he stress out over it? Should he be grieved? Should he call for the elders of the church and have them banned from ministry? Should he insist on their resignation? No! You only do that when they are preaching heresy. Paul’s response is given in **verse 18**, *“What then? Only that in every way, whether in pretense or in truth, Christ is proclaimed; and in this I rejoice.”* The preaching of Christ was Paul’s all-consuming passion and it ought to be our all-consuming passion as well. We don’t need to be consumed about those who preach as long as they are not preaching heresy.

We can rejoice in what God said in **Isaiah 55:11**. He said, *“So shall My word be which goes forth from My mouth; it shall not return to Me empty, without accomplishing what I desire, and without succeeding in the matter for which I sent it.”* John Eadie, a nineteenth century Scottish preacher, once said, *“The virtue lies...in the exposition and not in the expounder.”* (Taken from *A Commentary on The Greek Text of The Epistle of Paul to The Philippians* [reprint; Grand Rapids, Michigan: Baker Book House Company, 1979], page 41.) Therefore, let’s focus on the preaching not the preacher. Let’s focus on what is said about Jesus not what is said about people. Let’s focus on the message not the method. We should not care about personal recognition in ministry. We should only care that Jesus is preached, and that He is recognized and received as Savior and Lord.

Paul saw the bigger picture and so should we. He was big enough spiritually to look past the petty issues and rejoiced in the fact that Jesus was preached and people were coming into the kingdom. Paul did not rejoice in their sinful motives, but rather he rejoiced in the eternal results of the message. He rejoiced that a sovereign God honored His Word. Let’s keep our eyes off the methods used in worship and in sharing Christ and keep them on the object of our worship and what the message is all about – let’s keep them on Jesus Christ! Let’s rejoice in the preaching of Christ.

CHAPTER SEVEN

PHILIPPIANS 1:19-20**EXALTING CHRIST****Philippians 1:19-20**

“Yes, and I will rejoice, for I know that this will turn out for my deliverance through your prayers and the provision of the Spirit of Jesus Christ, according to my earnest expectation and hope, that I will not be put to shame in anything, but that with all boldness, Christ will even now, as always, be exalted in my body, whether by life or by death.”

In **Philippians 1:19-20**, it appears that Paul’s trial had begun or was about to begin, and he was committed to exalting Jesus Christ in the process. Paul was going to stand before Caesar and defend himself against the charges made by the Jews in Jerusalem. In the process He would defend the gospel and confirm the gospel (**Philippians 1:7 and 16**). In other words, Paul was going to stand before Caesar and tell him the truth about Jesus. He was going to tell Caesar, who considered himself to be a God, that Jesus *“existed in the form of God”* (**Philippians 2:6**). Paul was going to defend Christ’s eternal Deity. He was going to tell Caesar that, *“in Him all the fullness of Deity dwells in bodily form”* (**Colossians 2:9**). Paul was also going to tell Caesar about Christ’s humanity. That He *“emptied Himself, taking the form of a bond-servant...made in the likeness of men”* (**Philippians 2:7**) and *“...humbled Himself by becoming obedient to the point of death, even death on a cross”* (**Philippians 2:8**). Paul was going to tell Caesar, who expected people to bow before him, that Jesus was given a *“name which is above every name so that at the name of Jesus every knee will bow...and every tongue will confess that Jesus Christ is Lord, to the glory of God the Father”* (**Philippians 2:9-11**). Paul would let Caesar know that he too, one-day, would bow before Jesus.

Paul was going to exalt Jesus Christ with all boldness in the presence of Caesar even if it meant being put to death. As he said in **verse 20**, *“according to my earnest expectation and hope, that I will not be put to shame in anything, but that with all boldness, Christ will even now, as always, be exalted in my body, whether by life or by death.”* Paul wanted Jesus to be exalted whether it was by him living or dying. However, Paul had hope. He believed that He

would be released from prison and vindicated by the emperor's ruling because the saints in Philippi were praying.

THROUGH OUR PRAYERS

I believe the Philippian church understood Paul's resolve to proclaim Christ before Caesar, so they bathed Paul in prayer. This church not only participated with Paul in the gospel through their financial offerings and by sending Epaphroditus to assist Paul in ministry, but also through their prayers. Paul said in **verse 19**, ***"Yes, and I will rejoice, for I know that this will turn out for my deliverance through your prayers."***

I think Paul understood what James meant in **James 5:16** when he said, ***"The effective prayer of a righteous man can accomplish much."*** Paul had a righteous church praying for him. Paul already told us that the Philippian church was ***"filled with the fruit of righteousness which comes through Jesus Christ"*** (**Philippians 1:11**). Part of that fruit of righteousness included God answering their fervent prayers. Jesus said in **John 15:7-8**, ***"If you abide in Me, and My words abide in you, ask whatever you wish, and it will be done for you. My Father is glorified by this, that you bear much fruit, and so prove to be My disciples."*** The Philippian church was abiding in Christ and Paul knew that their prayers would be answered.

Therefore, Paul said, ***"I know that this will turn out for my deliverance through your prayers."*** The Greek word used for ***"I know"*** (***"oida"***) means ***"to know with certainty."*** Paul knew with certainty that their prayers would be answered because there is power in the prayers of a righteous church!

There is nothing more encouraging for someone in ministry, then to know someone is praying for them. It is all the more encouraging when you know the entire church is united in prayer for you. The basis for Paul's optimism was prayer. He knew that the powerful hand of God would move on his behalf because the church was praying.

God is glorified through our prayers and through answering our prayers, and Christ is exalted through our prayers. In **John 14:13-14** Jesus said, ***"Whatever you ask in My name, that will I do, so that the Father may be glorified in the Son. If you ask Me anything in My name, I will do it."*** Why, because Jesus wants to glorify His Father. He wants to exalt His Father. We should have the same goal in mind when it comes to Jesus. We should want Jesus exalted through our prayers.

Jesus said, ***"ask...in My name."*** Praying in the name of Jesus is not a formula tacked on to the end of our prayers. Praying in the name of Jesus means we are praying for the same things that He would pray for, desiring to see the same things accomplished that He would want to see accomplished. When we pray in the name of Jesus we are exalting Him. In **Philippians 2:9** we are told that, ***"God highly exalted Him, and bestowed on Him the name which is above every name."*** When we come to the throne of God in prayer, praying in the name of Jesus, we are coming before the Father in all the authority and power that name represents. Jesus is the One who opened the curtain giving us free access into the Holy of Holies – to the very throne of God. It is only through Christ and in the name of Jesus that we can come before the Father and ask Him anything. When we pray in the name of Jesus we are exalting Jesus before His Father as He sits upon His throne. There is power in the prayers of a righteous church, because God the Father

wants to exalt His Son through answering our prayers. It was true with the Philippian church and it is just as true today.

THROUGH THE HOLY SPIRIT

Paul's help would not only come as a result of the church praying, but through the provision of the Holy Spirit who is moved by prayer to take action. Paul relied on the intervention of God's Holy Spirit as a result of the fervent prayers of a righteous church. It would be the Holy Spirit who would give Paul the right words to speak as he stood before Caesar. Just as Jesus told His disciples in **Matthew 10:19-20**, *"But when they hand you over, do not worry about how or what you are to say; for it will be given you in that hour what you are to say. For it is not you who speaks, but it is the Spirit of your Father who speaks in you."* The provision of God's Holy Spirit would give Paul confidence and power and the words to speak in order to make a defense for himself and for the gospel. When the church comes together for prayer, Christ is exalted and the Spirit is moved to action on our behalf.

THROUGH OUR LIVES

Just as Jesus wanted to show people the Father through His life, so did Paul want to show people Jesus through His life. Paul wanted, above everything else, to exalt Jesus Christ whether he lived or died.

This is to be at the heart of our very existence. Paul said in **Romans 14:7-9**, *"For not one of us lives for himself, and not one of us dies for himself; for if we live, we live for the Lord, or if we die, we die for the Lord; therefore whether we live or die, we are the Lord's. For to this end Christ died and lived again, that He might be Lord both of the dead and of the living."* Because Jesus is our Lord both now and forever, then He is to be exalted both now and forever. If we don't want to exalt Christ now, then we certainly don't need to go to heaven where we will exalt Him for eternity. Isaiah told us in **Isaiah 2:11 and 17**, speaking of that future eternal kingdom, *"the LORD alone will be exalted in that day."* However, David spoke regarding his daily life in **Psalms 34:1-3**. He said, *"I will bless the LORD at all times; His praise shall continually be in my mouth. My soul shall make its boast in the LORD; the humble shall hear it and rejoice. O magnify the LORD with me, and let us exalt His name together."* That was David's passion and that was Paul's passion and it ought to be our passion in life as well. We are to exalt Jesus Christ!

The word *"exalted"* that is used by Paul in **verse 20** is *"megalunō"* in the Greek, which means *"to make great or magnify."* Paul was determined to magnify or exalt Jesus in his body, or through the way he lived his life. When we look through a telescope at the massive universe we magnify the stars and planets and bring them closer to our vision. When we look at the tiniest object through a microscope we magnify that object and bring it closer to our vision. The same is true when we exalt Jesus in our daily lives. When people see us going through our biggest challenges or through our run-of-the-mill activities, they should see Jesus magnified in our lives. They should see Jesus more clearly by the way we live. Our lives are to be like a telescope or microscope so people can see Jesus at work in our lives through the Holy Spirit. Jesus is to be exalted through the way we live.

Many people see God as being very distant. They do not see Him as someone who gets involved in our daily lives. They see Jesus as a good person who suffered a horrible death on the cross. In their thinking, maybe He rose again, but so what. It is just another religious belief -- no big deal. People need to see Jesus in us at work by the power of His Holy Spirit that lives in us who believe. They need to understand that when we put our faith in Jesus we enter into fellowship with Him and with the Father. They need to see that Jesus works in our lives in the big things and in the small things. This life that we now live is not about you and me it is all about Jesus. It is all about us exalting Jesus in our lives, so others might be reconciled with the Father, have their sins forgiven and enter that eternal fellowship.

One night, when I was an associate pastor, the church gathered together for a Concert of Prayer. One of our High School girls from the church had a friend of who wanted to hang out with her that night. This High School student invited her friend to the Concert of Prayer and said, "*We could hang out afterwards.*" She came and was so moved by what she heard and saw that night as Christians worshipped and prayed together that she prayed to receive Christ. Jesus was exalted through the life and prayers of a godly High School student that night. She let her friend see Jesus at work in her life.

Are you exalting Jesus Christ through the way you live your life? Christ is exalted through our prayers, through the working and provision of the Spirit, and through the way we live our daily lives. "***O magnify the LORD with me, and let us exalt His name together***" (**Psalm 34:3**).

CHAPTER EIGHT

PHILIPPIANS 1:21-26**HEADING IN TWO DIRECTIONS****Philippians 1:21-26**

“For to me, to live is Christ and to die is gain. But if I am to live on in the flesh, this will mean fruitful labor for me; and I do not know which to choose. But I am hard-pressed from both directions, having the desire to depart and be with Christ, for that is very much better; yet to remain on in the flesh is more necessary for your sake. Convinced of this, I know that I will remain and continue with you all for your progress and joy in the faith, so that your proud confidence in me may abound in Christ Jesus through my coming to you again.”

Every person that has trusted Jesus Christ as their personal Savior and Lord is heading in two directions. One direction is to depart from this life and live with Christ in heaven where we will see the grand finale of our faith. The other direction is to remain here on earth living for Christ where we see the grand accomplishments of God as He works in the hearts of people.

Paul was headed in those two directions and his thoughts were consumed by both. On one hand he desired to be with Jesus in heaven, yet on the other hand he was convinced his work on earth was not finished. Therefore, he would remain.

DEPART AND LIVE WITH CHRIST

Paul summed up his thoughts in **verse 21**, *“For me to live is Christ and to die is gain.”* In **verses 22-26**, Paul expands on both of these ideas. He focused mostly on *“to live is Christ”* and what that entails for him. He only briefly addressed *“to die is gain”* and what that means.

So, what did Paul mean when he said, *“to die is gain”* (**verse 21**)? Why was it so prevalent in his thinking? The outcome of Paul’s trial before Caesar had two possibilities. He would either be set free or he would be executed. Keep in mind that Paul was not only going to defend himself regarding the accusations made against him by the Jews in Jerusalem, but he was also going to boldly defend Christ and the gospel before Caesar. At the time he wrote this letter he did not know which direction his trial would take him. So, he wanted Christians to know he was pre-

pared to depart and be with Christ. He said that was gain. It seems, as you read this passage, Paul was excited about the possibility. In **verse 23** he said his desire was *“to depart and be with Christ, for that is very much better.”*

According to **2 Corinthians 12:2-4** Paul already had a glimpse into heaven. Paul said, *“I know a man in Christ who fourteen years ago – whether in the body I do not know, or out of the body I do not know, God knows – such a man was caught up to the third heaven. And I know how such a man – whether in the body or apart from the body I do not know, God knows – was caught up into Paradise and heard inexpressible words, which a man is not permitted to speak.”* There are three heavens revealed in Scripture:

- The sky or air that we breathe.
- The universe filled with stars.
- The place where God’s throne is located outside of time and space.

Whatever it was that Paul saw and heard, as he was caught up into the third heaven, it was *“very much better”* than anything he could ever experience in Christ on earth. To be in the presence of the living glorified Christ was so incredible that Paul could not even put it into words, nor was he permitted to put it into words. Words cannot even begin to adequately express the glory of heaven and the glory Christ.

The apostle John was the only one permitted to write what he saw concerning the glorified Christ in heaven, the throne of God and the New Jerusalem. He wrote it down in the Book of Revelation and it blows us away. Read what John saw concerning Jesus in **Revelation 1:12-16**, concerning the throne of God in **Revelation 4:1-8** and the New Jerusalem in **Revelation 21:10-23**. I believe this is some of what Paul saw as well.

In **Philippians 1:23** Paul said, *“But I am hard-pressed from both directions, having a desire to depart and be with Christ, for that is very much better.”* The phrase *“very much better”* refers to the highest possible bliss.

Paul understood that to die was to instantaneously leave his body and be in the presence of the Lord in the third heaven. In **2 Corinthians 5:1** Paul said, *“For we know that if the earthly tent which is our house is torn down, we have a building from God, a house not made with hands, eternal in the heavens.”* Of course, Paul is talking about our present, temporary bodies in comparison with our eternal resurrected glorified bodies.

In **2 Corinthians 5:8-9** Paul said, *“we are of good courage, I say, and prefer rather to be absent from the body and to be at home with the Lord. Therefore we also have as our ambition, whether at home or absent, to be pleasing to Him.”* Paul desired to be with Jesus in heaven, but here is the key to all that Paul was thinking: whether he lived on in the flesh or departed to be with the Lord, he wanted *“to be pleasing to Him.”*

Since God has allowed us to stay on this earth, then His will for our lives here on earth is not finished. There is something else He wants us to learn, or to accomplish by us sticking around. So, Paul said, *“to live is Christ.”* He wanted *“to be pleasing to Him.”* That too should be our attitude and hearts desire here and now.

REMAIN AND LIVE FOR CHRIST

What does Paul mean when he said, ***“For me, to live is Christ” (verse 21)***? He described what it meant for him in **verses 22-26** as he fulfilled God’s call upon his life. In other words, as he fulfilled his God given spiritual gift, as an apostle, Paul lived for Christ. For each of us, how we live for Christ will vary according to our own God given spiritual gifts. However, Paul’s description of what it meant for him to live for Christ establishes a good foundation for our lives as we live for Christ here and now exercising our spiritual gifts.

In **Philippians 1:22** Paul said, ***“But if I am to live on in the flesh, this will mean fruitful labor for me; and I do not know which to choose.”*** The Greek word translated in this verse as “know” is the word ***“gnōrizō,”*** which refers to something not previously known or revealed. Paul did ***“not know which to choose”*** because the Lord had not made it absolutely clear to him yet. He did not know how his trial would turn out -- if he would live or die. However, this he did know: if he lived, then he would live for Christ. He said, ***“But if I am to live on in the flesh, this will mean fruitful labor for me.”***

As we live and walk and have our existence in Christ, exercising the spiritual gifts that He has given us, we are to be fruitful. We are told in **Ephesians 2:10**, ***“For we are His workmanship, created in Christ Jesus for good works, which God prepared beforehand so that we would walk in them.”*** We are to accomplish the good work God has prepared for us to do. Now, what has God called us to do? He has called us to be fruitful in using your spiritual gifts.

God has prepared before hand the good work we are to do in Christ (**Ephesians 2:10**). He has given us spiritual gifts in order to accomplish that good work (**1 Peter 4:10**). Then, He equips us through the Scriptures (**2 Timothy 3:16-17**) so we can properly employ our spiritual gifts in accomplishing His good work. And, He has empowered us by the indwelling Holy Spirit so we accomplish that good work for His glory (**1 Peter 4:11**). As we are told in **1 Peter 4:10-11**, ***“As each one has received a special gift, employ it in serving one another as good stewards of the manifold grace of God. Whoever speaks, is to do so as one who is speaking the utterances of God; whoever serves is to do so as one who is serving by the strength which God supplies; so that in all things God may be glorified through Jesus Christ, to whom belongs the glory and dominion forever and ever. Amen.”*** Our labor in serving Christ and one another is to be fruitful (**John 15:8**) bringing glory to God the Father.

In the process of employing our spiritual gift, whatever that gift might be, we are still to be ambassadors for Christ. We are still in the ministry of reconciling people to God through faith in Christ (**2 Corinthians 5:18-21**). We are still witnesses for Jesus (**Acts 1:8**). ***“To live is Christ”***, means we are fruitful in our labor for Christ, for His glory, using our spiritual gifts and being a faithful witness.

Paul understood that for him to remain in the flesh was more necessary for the church. It was more important for him to stick around, so the church would progress in its ministry and continue to have joy in the faith. It was more important that Paul bring joy to other Christians than for him to experience the pleasures and joy of being with the Lord in heaven. That would come in due time. It was more important for Paul to stay, so the church’s confidence would abound as they saw God answering their prayers. Paul said in **verse 24-26**, ***“yet to remain on in the flesh is more necessary for your sake. Convinced of this, I know that I will remain and continue with you all for your progress and joy in the faith, so that your proud confidence in me may abound in Christ Jesus through my coming to you again.”*** The Lord still needed Paul on earth. There-

fore, Paul yielded his personal desire to depart and be with the Lord for the necessity of building up the church. He knew that untold millions still needed to hear the gospel. He turned his thoughts from harps and halos to hardship and hard work.

Paul had a purpose for living and that purpose was *“to live is Christ.”* We too have a purpose for living and that purpose is *“To live is Christ.”*

I am going to be very transparent for a moment. When my late wife departed to be with the Lord there was a time when I wanted to go too, so we could be with the Lord together. There are times even today that I wish she were still here to see and hold her grandchildren that she has never seen. When we lose a loved one (a parent, a child, or a spouse) family holidays are not the same. When tragedy strikes we must, at times, admit that we don't understand, nor do we necessarily like the Lord's decision. I know some of you today are experiencing similar feelings. However, I have come to several conclusions that I would like to share with you:

- First, I concluded that I have no right to question, or doubt the Lord's timing in His decision. He is Sovereign! He does not have an obligation to tell me why He did what He did. So, I stopped asking Him why and have accepted His sovereign will. If I did not consciously make that decision, then doubt, complacency, anger and bitterness were going to take over my life.
- Second, I concluded that I had a responsibility to be an example to my children and grandchildren and others. They needed to know how to face, walk through and move on with life in the midst of adversities by placing their faith in Jesus Christ.
- Third, I realized God had a purpose for leaving me here and a purpose for doing what He had done. So, I asked Him what would you like me to do now? Here I am Lord, if You consider me a vessel worthy of Your grace and prepared for Your service then, use me.

I have concluded that it is more necessary for me to remain and live for Christ than to depart and live with Christ. As Paul concluded in **Galatians 2:20**, *“I have been crucified with Christ (referring to his sinful nature); and it is no longer I who live, but Christ lives in me; and the life which I now live in the flesh I live by faith in the Son of God, who loved me and gave Himself up for me.”* *“To live is Christ!”* May the Lord use us in the building up of His church as well as in bring joy and confidence to other Christians. May we be faithful in doing the good work that He has prepared for us using our spiritual gifts, equipped by His Word and empowered by His Holy Spirit for His glory. May we continue to head in two directions being prepared to be used by Him as we live for Him now, yet having the desire to be with Him for eternity in glory.

CHAPTER NINE

PHILIPPIANS 1:27-30

KEEPING SPIRITUAL INTEGRITY

Philippians 1:27-30

Only conduct yourselves in a manner worthy of the gospel of Christ, so that whether I come and see you or remain absent, I will hear of you that you are standing firm in one spirit, with one mind striving together for the faith of the gospel; in no way alarmed by your opponents – which is a sign of destruction for them, but salvation for you, and that too, from God. For to you it has been granted for Christ’s sake, not only to believe in Him, but also to suffer for His sake, experiencing the same conflict which you saw in me, and now hear to be in me.”

Paul turned his attention back to the Philippian congregation in **Philippians 1:27-30**. He calls on them to maintain their spiritual integrity and to behave in a manner that is consistent with the gospel. Paul’s appeal, as we will see, applies to every Christian.

Paul began by saying, *“Only conduct yourselves in a manner worthy of the gospel of Christ.”* The Greek word used for *“conduct”* in **verse 27** is *“politeuomai”* which is a political term. It means, *“to live as citizens.”*

The city of Philippi, where the Philippian church was located, was considered to be a *“little Rome.”* The citizens in Philippi took pride in being Roman citizens. So much so that they gave their allegiance to Rome and to the emperor. They adopted Roman clothing styles, took Roman names and spoke Latin – the official language of Rome. They were responsible citizens and would not do anything that would give Rome a bad reputation. They *“politeuomai,”* they conducted themselves in a manner worthy of Rome. They lived as citizens of Rome.

Paul understood their dedication to Rome when he used the word *“conduct”* or *“politeuomai”* in reference to the Philippian church. Just as the citizens of Philippi were dedicated to being good citizens of Rome while in Philippi, so the Christians were to be dedicated to being good citizens of heaven while on earth. In **Philippians 3:20** Paul reminds us that, *“our citizenship is in heaven”* not here on earth.

As Christians we are to live as heavenly citizens on earth and we are to do so *“in a manner worthy of the gospel of Christ.”* In other words, we are to live a life that is consistent to what we

believe, teach and preach. We are to live a life that is centered in Christ. We are to live a life that is consistent with the Word of God. We are to live a life that is a positive witness for Christ. We are to live with spiritual integrity as citizens of heaven.

The Christian's greatest testimony before a world that is in darkness is a life that has spiritual integrity. When Christians compromise the Biblical standards of morality and reverence for their Lord, they compromise the character. By doing so they seriously weaken the credibility of the gospel and lessen their own impact on the world for Christ. An unbelieving world cannot be expected to embrace faith in Christ when believers do not emulate holiness and manifest the transforming power of Christ. The world around us sees our lives and whether our lives are consistent with what we believe, before they are ready to hear what we have to say about the gospel.

Someone once wrote a poem concerning the gospel. It says:

“You are writing a gospel,
 A chapter each day,
 By the deeds that you do
 And the words that you say.
 Men read what you write,
 Whether faithful or true:
 Just what is the gospel
 According to you?”
 (Author unknown.)

The point is this: The world needs to see Christ in our behavior. Therefore, our behavior needs to reflect what we believe. Our behavior needs to be such that it can be identified with the gospel of Jesus Christ. Our lifestyle is what opens the doors for the gospel to be shared. Before people are willing to listen to what we have to say, they must see the way we live -- our spiritual integrity. They must see our lives being changed and transformed by the power of the living God through our faith in Jesus Christ and by the work of His Holy Spirit in us. We must conduct ourselves in a manner worthy of the gospel. We must have spiritual integrity seven days a week.

How do we maintain our spiritual integrity? We do it by being united together as a church. We do it by making a personal commitment and a commitment together as a church to:

- Stand together firm in one spirit.
- Strive together with one mind for the faith of the gospel.
- And, if need be, we suffer together for Christ's sake.

STANDING TOGETHER

In **verse 27** Paul said he wanted to hear that the Philippian church was *“standing firm in one spirit.”* The phrase *“standing firm”* is one word in the original Greek (*“stēkō”*). It is usually applied to a soldier who stands firm at his post, or stands firm in defending his position against his enemy. Paul used the phrase to instruct the church to stand firm in what it believes about the gospel of Christ. In **1 Corinthians 15:1-4** Paul wrote down what the gospel is. He said, *“Now I make known to you, brethren, the gospel which I preached to you, which also you received, in which also you stand, by which also you are saved, if you hold fast the word which I preached to you, unless you believe in vain. For I delivered to you as of first importance what I also re-*

ceived, that Christ died for our sins according to the Scriptures, and that He was buried, and that He was raised on the third day according to the Scriptures.” In **Galatians 1:8** Paul said, *“But even if we, or an angel from heaven, should preach to you a gospel contrary to what we have preached to you, he is to be accursed!”*

I think Paul knew that there would be those who would oppose the gospel of Christ or attempt to preach a different gospel for salvation. Perhaps they would preach a false gospel that is based on good works rather than upon the grace of God. So, He gave the church a word picture of a soldier who would stand firm and take up a defensive position. He instructed the church, which is also to be good soldiers for Christ, to stand firm together defending the gospel of Christ one in spirit, no matter what the opposition might be. In **Ephesians 6:10-11** Paul said, *“Finally, be strong in the Lord and in the strength of His might. Put on the full armor of God, so that you will be able to stand firm against the schemes of the devil.”* The church is not to back down regarding the good news about Jesus. Paul, and thousands of others down through history, went to prison because they would not back down regarding the gospel.

We are to stand firm. The way we do that is by being of one spirit. Our hearts are to be knit together as one when it comes to the gospel message. We are to share the gospel message with the same love and heart felt concern for people that Jesus has. The church is to be united together with one message – the gospel of Jesus Christ. The church is to be united together with a lifestyle that reflects the gospel of Jesus Christ.

STRIVING TOGETHER

Paul also wanted to hear that the church was *“with one mind striving together for the faith of the gospel”* (**verse 27**). The phrase *“striving together”* is also one word in the original Greek text. It is the word *“sunathleō”* from which we get our English words *“athlete”* and *“athletics.”* The phrase *“striving together”* gives us a picture of an athletic team working together as one to secure a victory over a common foe.

By using the phrase *“striving together”* Paul is saying that the church is to work together as a well disciplined team focused on a common goal and that common goal is *“the faith of the gospel.”* Paul said we are to have *“one mind”* when it comes to *“the faith of the gospel.”* We are to have the same purpose, the same focus, the same goals, the same objectives, and the same vision when it comes to the gospel. We are to be working together or striving together for the faith of the gospel.

The faith of the gospel is that body of divine truth that has been entrusted to the church (the gospel of Jesus Christ and the very Word of God), which we are to communicate and pass on to others. Then, after we communicate the gospel and people respond, we are to help them grow in their faith through discipleship and the teaching and preaching of God’s Word. We are to work together with one mind for the faith of the gospel.

It takes teamwork to keep the doors of the church open and the gospel and the Word of God going out. It takes financial commitment and time commitment and we are all to do our part. It takes a church that is willing to come together and pray together.

The church is to be engaged in the expository preaching of God’s Word, in evangelism, in discipleship and in fervent prayer, so the next generation of believers will know, appreciate, use

and be able to pass on the great heritage of the faith. This is why there is church. We are to be ***“standing firm in one spirit, with one mind striving together for the faith of the gospel.”***

Now there is someone who does not want that to happen. He does not want to see unity within the church. Satan wants to divide churches or cause them to lose their unity. He wants to get Christians so discouraged that they won't go to church. He wants to get Christians so busy that they don't have time for church. There is a spiritual battle that is going on, therefore, we must be prepared to suffer together for the sake of Christ as Paul told the Philippian church in **Philippians 1:28-30**.

SUFFERING TOGETHER

Paul said, ***“...in no way alarmed by your opponents – which is a sign of destruction for them, but salvation for you, and that too, from God. For to you it has been granted for Christ's sake, not only to believe in Him, but also to suffer for His sake, experiencing the same conflict which you saw in me, and now hear to be in me.”*** The word ***“alarmed”*** in the Greek (***“pturō”***) is used only here in the New Testament. It refers to a horse that bolts straight up with its feet in the air because of something harmless in its path, such as mistaking a stick for a snake.

The point that Paul is making is this: don't get overly concerned about opposition or persecution. Those who oppose us for our faith only prove that our faith is real and it is a sign of their destruction. If we suffer for Christ's sake, then we are to do it without fear. We are to go through opposition with our spiritual integrity intact. ***“Greater is He who is in you than he who is in the world” (1 John 4:4)***.

A church that maintains its spiritual integrity by standing firm in one spirit, with one mind striving together for the faith of the gospel becomes a church that will have a positive impact for Christ throughout the world. Just like the Philippian church.

CHAPTER TEN

PHILIPPIANS 2:1-2

THE CIRCLE OF UNITY = JOY

Philippians 2:1-2

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

When I worked in the corporate world almost everyone I talked with wanted joy in their lives. For many it seemed like an illusive butterfly. They were always perusing it, but it fluttered just beyond their reach.

People tried everything to get it. Everything from acquiring material possessions and money, climbing the corporate ladder, having intimate relationships, traveling to exotic places, etc. Some, thinking that the grass was greener on the other side of the hill, thought they could find joy by changing marriage partners, jobs, locations, etc. I have discovered that people will do almost anything to have true joy their lives.

Some gave up on the idea. I was one of those people for a while. When I was a young man I did not have joy in my life. I tried almost everything to get it. I finally concluded that it was something you had as a child, but lost when you entered adulthood. However, for me, seeing true joy in the lives of Christians was one of the factors that brought me to a place where I decided to put my faith in Christ as my personal Savior and Lord. The joy in our lives as Christians can have a powerful affect on other people, because the One who is all-powerful and the Holy Spirit that dwells within every believer, is the One who gives it (Galatians 5:22).

Paul revealed in Philippians 2:1-2 where joy comes from, what makes joy complete and how we can maintain the joy in our lives. In these verses we find there are 4 motivating factors and 4 essential principles that form a circle of unity that makes joy complete and enables us to maintain joy in our lives and within the church. Paul reveals the missing link to joy, which is unity in Christ, made possible by the indwelling power of God’s Holy Spirit in our lives. In verse 2 Paul said, *“make my joy complete by”* and then immediately describes the circle of unity.

Paul considered unity to be so important that he addressed it in every one of his letters. For example, in **Ephesians 4:3** he said, *“be diligent to preserve the unity of the Spirit in the bond of peace.”* Jesus considered unity so vital that He included it in His prayer to the Father just prior to His crucifixion in **John 17:20-23**. He prayed, *“I do not ask on behalf of these alone, but for those also who believe in Me through their word; that they may all be one; even as You, Father, are in Me and I in You, that they also may be in Us, so that the world may believe that You sent Me. The glory which You have given Me I have given to them, that they may be one, just as We are one; I in them and You in Me, that they may be perfected in unity, so that the world may know that You sent Me, and loved them, even as You have loved Me.”* Unity is powerful and when the circle of unity is established within the church, within Christian marriages, within our personal lives, and within our interpersonal relationships, then we will have true joy.

4 MOTIVATING FACTORS

Lets look at the four factors that should motivate us to maintain the unity that leads to joy. In **Philippians 2:1-2a** Paul said, *“Therefore if there is any encouragement in Christ, if there is any consolation of love, if there is any fellowship of the Spirit, if any affection and compassion, make my joy complete by...”* doing **verse 2b**, *“being of the same mind, maintaining the same love, united in spirit, intent on one purpose.”* Because the word *“if”* is used four times in **verse 1** it seems to place a condition on **verse 2**. In other words, if verse one happens, then verse two will happen. However, Paul is not using the word *“if”* as a condition, but rather as an argument. Paul is introducing what is called a first-class conditional clause that expresses the idea: *“if this condition is true in verse one, and it is, then make my joy complete by doing verse two.”* Both Dr. J. Vernon McGee (*Thru The Bible, Volume V*, page 300) and Dr. John MacArthur (*The MacArthur New Testament Commentary on Philippians*, page 103) agree that the word *“if”* in verse one would be better translated as *“since”*. **Verse 1-2a** would then read, *“Therefore since there is encouragement in Christ, since there is consolation of love, since there is fellowship of the Spirit, since there is affection and compassion, make my joy complete by”* -- doing what is listed in **verse 2b**. These four factors preceded by the word *“if”* are not conditions, but rather motivators that cause us to maintain unity that leads to joy.

The first factor that motivates us to maintain the unity that leads to joy is *“encouragement in Christ.”* The Greek word for *“encouragement”* is *“paraklesis,”* which literally means *“a calling to one’s aid.”* In other words, since we are in Christ we can call upon Christ to come along side to help us maintain the unity that leads to joy. And, since He has already given us another helper, the Holy Spirit (see **John 14:16**), and since the Holy Spirit and Christ and the Father are One and the Spirit is in us, then we have at our disposal the power and divine motivation to maintain the unity that leads to joy. There is great encouragement in the church when its congregation maintains unity, which in turn leads to joy.

The second factor, which motivates us to maintain the unity that leads to joy is the *“consolation of love.”* The word *“consolation”* in the Greek language is *“paramuthion.”* This word is only used this one time in Scripture and it literally means, *“speaking closely with someone with the idea of giving comfort.”* The NKJ Bible translates the statement as *“comfort of love.”* The NIV translates the statement as *“comfort from his love.”* I believe the NIV captures the intent of

this passage the best. There is amazing unity that leads to joy when we are comforted by the words of Christ and His love by His Spirit who is the Comforter (**Acts 9:31**). There is also amazing unity that leads to joy when we are comforted by others or when we comfort others. There is a bound and unspeakable joy.

There are those moments when the words we speak brings great comfort to the one to whom we are speaking. It is one way that we express to them our love. The same is true with Jesus as He speaks to us words of comfort through the Word of God.

Shortly after my wife went home to be with Jesus. I was walking down the hallway of my home quite discouraged when I found a piece of paper lying on the floor. I bent down to pick up the paper to throw it away. As I did I discovered it was part of a page torn from the Bible. On one side of the piece of paper were these words: *“Though sometimes things do not happen like we want them to, God works things together for our good. In times of trouble.”* I turned the piece of paper over and read these words: *“Be thankful for what you have. God knows you and will take care of you.”* In that moment of my greatest need, God spoke to me through His Word by His Spirit to bring comfort to my heart. Because of the comfort of God’s love, He motivated me to keep unity and harmony within my family as we went through our darkest hours together. He honored His Word and brought comfort through His Word, because of His love for my family and me. There is comfort in His love, which motivates us to keep the unity that leads to joy.

The third factor, which motivates us to maintain the unity that leads to joy is the *“fellowship of the Spirit.”* Every person that has trusted Jesus Christ as their personal Savior and Lord has been given the Holy Spirit to dwell in them. As we are told in **1 Corinthians 6:19-20**, *“Or, do you not know that your body is a temple of the Holy Spirit who is in you, whom you have from God, and that you are not your own? For you have been bought with a price: therefore glorify God in your body.”* Because of the presence of His Holy Spirit within us we can have fellowship with Jesus and with God the Father. As the apostle John said in **1 John 1:3**, *“...what we have seen and heard we proclaim to you also, so that you too may have fellowship with us; and indeed our fellowship is with the Father, and with His Son Jesus Christ.”* As Jesus said in **Revelation 3:20**, *“Behold, I stand at the door and knock; if anyone hears My voice and opens the door, I will come in to him and will dine with him, and he with Me.”* This is made possible by the presence of the Holy Spirit.

The Holy Spirit is the seal of our eternal inheritance (**Ephesians 1:13-14**). He is the source of our spiritual power (**Acts 1:8**). He is the source of our spiritual gifts (**1 Corinthians 12:4-11**). He is the source of spiritual fruit (**Galatians 5:22-23**). He fills us with His presence (**Ephesians 5:18-19**). He baptizes us into the body of Christ – the church (**1 Corinthians 12:13**). He is our teacher (**John 14:26, 1 John 2:20-27**). He is the One who brings us into sweet fellowship with God Almighty. Because of that fellowship there is a motivating desire within us to maintain the unity that leads to joy. To do any less is sin – it grieves the Holy Spirit.

The fourth factor, which motivates us to maintain the unity that leads to joy is *“affection and compassion.”* These are qualities that were characterized by Christ and are part of our new nature in Christ (**Colossians 3:12**). Because of our affection and compassion towards one another, we don’t want to do anything that brings disunity. It is only when we don’t exercise affection or show compassion that disunity can find a foothold.

Because of these four God given factors that motivate us to maintain unity Paul said, ***“make my joy complete by being of the same mind, maintaining the same love, united in spirit, intent on one purpose.”*** Paul gives us four principles that form the circle of unity. They complement each other, they overlap each other and they are inseparable. Paul tells us what to do so we maintain the unity that brings joy within the church, our families, and interpersonal relationship.

4 ESSENTIAL PRINCIPLES

First, we are to have ***“the same mind.”*** To do that we must think Biblically. We are to know the Word of God and let it transform our minds, so we think like Christ and act as Christ. In **2 Corinthians 10:5** Paul said, ***“We are destroying speculations and every lofty thing raised up against the knowledge of God, and we are taking every thought captive to the obedience of Christ.”*** Biblical thinking translates into Biblical actions that keeps unity and produces joy.

My late wife and I were of one mind on almost everything, except for one thing that was of a political nature. It was one of those subjects that pushed both of our hot buttons. Every time the subject came up we had a lively discussion. We each believed the other was wrong and neither one of us were going to change our mind. We had no unity or joy when the matter came up. So, what were we to do? We decided to agree to disagree and to drop the subject. We decided not to allow the devil to drive a wedge into our relationship over the matter. We had one mind on the subject and that was not to talk about it. Sometimes for the sake of unity and joy that is what you do. Being of the same mind is crucial to unity that brings joy.

The second thing we are to do is ***“maintain the same love.”*** The Greek word that Paul used for ***“love”*** is ***“agape.”*** This is God’s love. It is one of His transferable attribute. He gives us His love by His Holy Spirit. It is one of the fruits of the Spirit and we are to live by it and share with others. This love is not based upon ones preference or upon ones attractiveness or ones worthiness. This love refers to an act of our will that translates into a sacrificial service, which is governed by selfless humility. It is the same kind of love that God the Father had for us when He sent His Son to the cross for you and me (**John 3:16**).

In **John 15:12**, we are told to love one another just as Christ loves us. Paul said in **Colossians 3:14**, ***“Beyond all these things put on love, which is the perfect bond of unity.”*** Love is the glue that holds us together and as a result it brings us joy.

The third thing we are to be is ***“united in spirit.”*** This is related to having the same mind and maintaining the same love. By definition it excludes personal ambition, selfishness, hatred, envy, jealousy, and those things related to self-love. Being united in spirit involves a deep and passionate concern for God, His Word, His work, His gospel and His people. It means to live in selfless harmony with other believers. When we are united in spirit we are united in such a way that it brings joy to our hearts and into our relationships.

The fourth thing we are to be is ***“intent on one purpose.”*** That is why every church should have a vision statement and strategic initiatives that guides the church towards its vision. We are to be purpose driven. When we are all moving in an agreed upon direction there is unity that brings joy.

As I met with a pastor friend of mine he asked: ***“How is the unity in your church?”*** It gave me great joy to say, ***“Great!”*** He then asked, ***“How is the unity on your elder board?”*** I told

him, *“We have very godly people who are committed to the church, to one another and to our Lord Jesus Christ. We have incredible unity. We are having fun. In fact, we really enjoy working together in ministry.”* The reason I could say those things is because we were intent on one purpose. We new what God wanted to accomplish through us.

MAKES JOY COMPLETE

Paul said, *“make my joy complete.”* One of the greatest desires of those in leadership is to have joy in their ministry. One of the ways that happens is when people are walking in unity with Christ. So Paul said, *“make my joy complete by being of the same mind, maintaining the same love, united in one spirit, intent on one purpose.”* *“Being of the same mind”* that is based upon Biblical thinking leads to *“maintaining the same love”* which is taught in the Bible and given to us by God. *“Maintaining the same love”* leads to being *“united in spirit.”* Being *“united in spirit”* leads to being *“intent on one purpose”* which again leads to *“being of the same mind.”* The circle of unity brings about incredible joy as we live our lives in Christ and for Christ. May we never allowing anything or anyone to break our circle of unity. To God be the glory!

CHAPTER ELEVEN

PHILIPPIANS 2:3-4

THE CIRCLE OF UNITY IN MOTION

Philippians 2:3-4

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

In Philippians 2:1 we saw four factors that should motivate us to maintain unity within the church, within Christian marriages and within our interpersonal Christian relationships: *“encouragement in Christ,” “consolation of love,” “fellowship of the Spirit”* and *“affection and compassion.”* Then, in Philippians 2:2 we saw four interrelated principles that form a circle of unity that brings joy. Paul said, *“make my joy complete by being of the same mind, maintaining the same love, united in one spirit, intent on one purpose.”* *“Being of the same mind”* is based upon Biblical thinking that leads to *“maintaining the same love”* which is taught in the Bible and given to us by God. *“Maintaining the same love”* leads to being *“united in spirit.”* And, being *“united in spirit”* leads to being *“intent on one purpose”* which again leads to *“being of the same mind.”* This circle of unity brings incredible joy into our lives as we live for Christ. Understanding these two verses is essential to understanding Philippians 2:3-4.

In Philippians 2:3-4 we see four interrelated conditions that must be achieved in order to put in motion the circle of unity presented in verse 2. The circle of unity is set in motion when there is no selfishness or empty conceit, and when there is humility of mind and a balanced focus between our own personal interests with the interests of others.

WITH NO SELFISHNESS

The first condition we are to achieve, so we put the circle of unity in motion is, *“Do nothing from selfishness.”* The Greek word used for *“selfishness”* can also be translated as *“selfish ambition”* as it is in Philippians 1:17. Selfishness refers to a person who seeks a personal advantage, or a personal gain regardless of how it might affect another person. It is often associated

with building up ones self by tearing down someone else. It is a prideful attitude that pushes its own way. A person who is selfish is usually loyal only to themselves.

For a while I was part of the sales team for a large corporation. For several months I pursued a project that would launch our corporation into a brand new international market. The competition came down to just two companies, ours being the team to beat. I was about to leave the office to make the final presentation when my boss realized that whoever was the sales person to win this project would be catapulted into a management position overseeing all the sales activity for this international market. He could not pass up the career opportunity. So, he pushed me aside and said: *"I'll make the final presentation."* His selfish ambition lost us the project and he personally lost enormous credibility as a sales person. He was eventually transferred out of sales and into one of our smallest offices that was about to close its doors.

Selfishness always hurts someone and it destroys unity. In **James 3:16** we are told, ***"For where jealousy and selfish ambition exist, there is disorder and every evil thing."*** Selfishness is at the heart of every sin. Quite often it breeds rivalry, quarreling, infighting, strife, anger, resentment and jealousy. Whenever selfishness gets a foothold in our attitudes or actions it needs to be recognized for what it is: a sin that needs to be confessed to the Lord. We need to apply **1 John 1:9**, which says, ***"If we confess our sins, He is faithful and righteous to forgive us our sins and to cleanse us from all unrighteousness."***

When there is selfishness there is no unity. Selfishness breaks the circle of unity mentioned in **verse 2**. People no longer have ***"the same mind"*** and ***"the same love,"*** they are no longer ***"united in spirit"*** and ***"intent on one purpose."***

WITH NO EMPTY CONCEIT

The second condition we are to achieve, so we put the circle of unity in motion is, ***"Do nothing from...empty conceit."*** The Greek word for ***"empty conceit"*** (***"kenodoxia"***) literally means, ***"empty glory."*** People who are selfish pursue a personal advantage or gain over others. While people who have ***"empty conceit"*** pursue personal glory and recognition or praise from others. They seek the applause.

Now, it is okay to receive praise and recognition and even applause. We all need affirmation. However, when we receive it, we should receive it graciously giving God the glory for what He has done in us, for us and through us. It is not okay to seek it or think we are so good that we deserve it. That is empty conceit. As the apostle Paul said in **Romans 12:3**, ***"I say to everyone among you not to think more highly of himself than he ought to think."***

There is a reason most churches call what the preacher stands on a platform and not a stage. Preachers are not to stand before their congregation desiring personal glory. They are not there to perform. They are merely an extension of the congregation, using their spiritual gifts and talents to glorify the Lord and equip the church. They are just one of the members of the church whose spiritual gift has taken them out of the pews and onto the platform to serve God. They are to lead their congregation in a continuation of their own personal worship of the Lord that has been going on throughout the week. They open the Word of God so we all can feast together on the same passage of Scripture letting the same Holy Spirit teach us and equip us.

People who have an empty conceit have a highly exaggerated view of themselves. They are all about unity as long as it is built around them. Such people consider themselves as always right and expect others to agree with them. Some mistake this quality for leadership. I had a boss that hung a sign on the wall of his office that said, *“Be reasonable! Do it my way!”* To countered with a sign at my desk that said, *“Man only has two faults, what he says and what he does.”*

Empty conceit is an arrogant pride that usually leads to a great fall. As Dr. James Dobson once said, *“Whenever I’m tempted to become self-important and authoritative, I’m reminded of what the mother whale said to her baby: ‘When you get to the top and start to ‘blow,’ that’s when you get harpooned!’”* (Taken from *The Strong-Willed Child* by Dr. James Dobson, Copyright © 1978. Used by permission of Tyndale House Publishers, Inc. All rights reserved.) I think there is a lot of wisdom in that statement. As we are told in **Proverbs 16:18**, *“Pride goes before destruction, and a haughty spirit before stumbling.”* Empty conceit creates empty unity.

WITH HUMILITY OF MIND

The third condition we are to achieve in order to put the circle of unity in motion is, *“with humility of mind regard one another as more important than yourselves.”* This of course is the opposite of selfishness and empty conceit or pride.

In **Ephesians 4:1-3** Paul said, *“Therefore I, the prisoner of the Lord, implore you to walk in a manner worthy of the calling with which you have been called, with all humility and gentleness, with patience, showing tolerance for one another in love, being diligent to preserve the unity of the Spirit in the bond of peace.”* Humility of mind is key to keeping unity within our Christian relationships.

In **1 Peter 5:5-7** we are told, *“You younger men, likewise, be subject to your elders; and all of you, cloth yourselves with humility toward one another, for God is opposed to the proud, but gives grace to the humble. Therefore humble yourselves under the mighty hand of God, that He may exalt you at the proper time, casting all your anxiety on Him, because He cares for you.”* We are not to put ourselves in a place of authority, or in a place of ministry, or self impose ourselves as elders or leaders in the church. Such actions only bring disorder and disunity. We can certainly desire a position of authority, but it is to be God who exalts us to that position, not ourselves. God is the One who exalts people when they humble themselves under His mighty hand. Therefore, *“with humility of mind”* we are to *“regard one another as more important than yourselves.”* To put it another way, we are not to think we are more important than someone else.

Humility of mind is what Jesus had when He left heaven to go to the cross. In **Philippians 2:8** it says, *“He humbled Himself.”* He regarded you and me as more important than He sitting upon His throne in all His glory. He entered the human race and went to the cross so you and I might have our sins forgiven and be reconciled to His Father in heaven. He humbled Himself so we might not be separated from the Father for all eternity and thrown into the lake of fire. He entered the human race so He could show us the Father and the Father’s will.

We too are to have humility of mind. I think John the Baptist said it the best in **John 3:30**. He said, *“He must increase, but I must decrease.”* Humility of mind is a decreasing self and an increasing Christ in the way we think and behave.

WITH A BALANCED FOCUS

The fourth condition we are to achieve so we put the circle of unity in motion is, ***“do not merely look out for your own personal interests, but also for the interests of others.”*** This verse does not say give up your personal interests, but rather keep your interests in balance with the interests of others.

At one point in my corporate career I was working for a senior vice president in the company. Whenever he saw me, he never said good morning or how are you doing. Rather, he said, *“Remember, what can I do for you?”* My point is this, when we are looking out for the interests of others we take the initiative to look for ways to help them, not what we can get from them.

When I was promoted into a management position I receive some very good advice from my father-in-law. His advice has stayed with me even in ministry. He said, *“Train those who are under your supervision so well that you could work for them someday.”* Looking out for the interests of others brings encouragement, promotes trust and dedication and builds unity. It puts the circle of unity in motion.

When we are unselfish, when we are not seeking our own glory, when we are humble enough to regard others as more important than ourselves and when we take the initiative to look out for the interests of others, then the circle of unity is set in motion. We have ***“the same mind”*** that is based upon Biblical thinking, which leads to ***“maintaining the same love”*** that is taught in the Bible and given to us by God. We maintain ***“the same love”*** that leads to being ***“united in spirit”*** which in turn leads to being ***“intent on one purpose”*** which again leads to ***“being of the same mind.”***

The four motivating factors (in **verse 1**) enables us to maintain unity and the four principles (in **verse 2**) form the circle of unity and the four achievements (in **verses 3-4**) puts the circle of unity in motion, which is only possible when Jesus Christ is at the center of our lives.

CHAPTER TWELVE

PHILIPPIANS 2:5-8**THE ATTITUDE OF CHRIST****Philippians 2:5-8**

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

In **Philippians 2:5**, Paul gives us the switch that turns on: the 4 factors that motivate us to maintain the unity that leads to joy, the 4 interrelated principles that form the circle of unity and the 4 interrelated conditions that must be achieved or the circle of unity to be placed in motion. Paul said, in **verse 5**, *“Have this attitude in yourselves which was also in Christ Jesus.”* The switch, the power that enables us to maintain unity that leads to joy, the attitude that must be prevalent in the church, our personal lives and relationships is humility.

Paul not only declares that we are to have the same attitude of humility as Christ, he also shows us how Christ demonstrated that attitude of humility. Paul presents what has been called, the theological diamond of the New Testament in **Philippians 2:5-8**. Jesus is the ultimate example of humility.

CONCERNING HIS EXAMPLE

The phrase in **verse 5**, *“have this attitude”* looks both backward and forward with the goal of maintaining the God given unity that leads to joy in Christ through humility. In **Matthew 11:29**, Jesus said, *“Take My yoke upon you and learn from Me, for I am gentle and humble in heart, and you will find rest for your souls.”* When it comes to humility, Jesus is our example. We are to learn from Him what humility truly is.

As Jesus was finishing His Last Supper, just before His crucifixion, He did something very unusual. He started washing the disciple’s feet. When He finished, He said in **John 13:12-15**,

“Do you know what I have done to you? You call Me Teacher and Lord; and you are right, for so I am. If I then, the Lord and the Teacher, washed your feet, you also ought to wash one another’s feet. For I gave you an example that you also should do as I did to you.” Jesus was not talking about physically washing one another’s feet, but rather He was talking about having the attitude of humility that leads to serving one another. He was demonstrating what Paul stated in **Philippians 2:3**, ***“...with humility of mind regard one another as more important than yourselves.”***

The attitude of Christ is to be the attitude of the Christian. We are to think as He did – Biblically. We are to live as He lived. We are to be His disciples in attitude and action. In **1 John 2:6** we are told, ***“the one who says he abides in Him ought himself to walk in the same manner as He walked.”*** Like Jesus, we must be willing to walk in humility – humble in heart – setting “self” aside for the kingdom of God. When we are humble in heart, then the switch is turned on, the engine is started and unity and joy result.

CONCERNING HIS DEITY

In **Philippians 2:6-8**, we see Christ’s example of humility. We are told in **verse 6**, ***“...although He existed in the form of God, did not regard equality with God a thing to be grasped.”*** The Greek word for “form” (“*morphē*”) refers to the outward manifestation of an inner reality that never alters. In other words, Jesus preexisted as God. This is strengthened by the Greek word for “existed” (“*huparchō*”), which conveys the continuance of a previous state or existence. Jesus Christ always has been and will forever continue to exist as God.

The Bible clearly states the deity of Christ, just as Jesus Himself did:

- In **John 1:1-3** we are told, ***“In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God. He was in the beginning with God. All things came into being through Him, and apart from Him nothing came into being that has come into being.”*** Then in **verse 14** we are told, ***“And the Word became flesh, and dwelt among us, and we saw His glory, glory as of the only begotten from the Father, full of grace and truth.”***
- In both **Colossians 1:16-17** and **Hebrews 1:2-3** Jesus is introduced as God the Creator of all things.
- In **John 5:18** we read, ***“For this reason therefore the Jews were seeking all the more to kill Him, because He not only was breaking the Sabbath, but also was calling God His own Father, making Himself equal with God.”***
- In **John 8:58** Jesus said, ***“Truly, truly, I say to you, before Abraham was born, I am.”***
- In **John 10:30** Jesus said, ***“I and the Father are one.”***
- In **John 10:33** we read, ***“The Jews answered Him, ‘For a good work we do not stone You, but for blasphemy; and because You, being a man, make Yourself out to be God.’”***
- In **John 14:9** Jesus said, ***“Have I been so long with you, and yet you have not come to know Me, Philip? He who has seen Me has seen the Father; how can you say, ‘Show us the Father?’”***

We must understand who Jesus is. Paul said, He ***“did not regard equality with God a thing to be grasped”*** or something to be seized by force or as an award or prize. Jesus could never loose

who He was so He did not need to hold on to His position in heaven. Jesus came on a mission to fulfill His role as our kinsmen-redeemer.

A successful job counselor once said: *“If you want to find out what a worker is really like, don’t give him responsibility – give him privileges. Most people can handle responsibilities if you pay them enough, but it takes a real leader to handle privileges. A leader will use his privileges to help others and build the organization – a lesser person will use his privileges to promote himself.”* Jesus used His divine privileges for the sake of others. It was the only way by which He could offer forgiveness of sin, reconciliation with the Father and eternal life. He had to enter humanity to the cross.

CONCERNING HIS HUMANITY

In **Philippians 2:7**, we are told that He *“emptied Himself, taking the form of a bond-servant, and being made in the likeness of men.”* In other words, *“The Word became flesh, and dwelt among us”* (**John 1:14**)!

It is important to understand that Jesus never stopped being God while in human form. It is an impossibility for God to stop being God. He did not lose any of His attributes of deity, but rather took on the limitations of humanity. As a result He willingly laid aside five of His divine prerogatives during His time on earth. For example:

- He temporarily laid aside His glory. As Jesus prayed to the Father notice what He said in **John 17:5**. He said, *“Now Father, glorify Me together with Yourself, with the glory which I had with You before the world was.”* In **Revelation 21:23**, we find that Jesus was given back His glory.
- He temporarily set aside His independent divine authority. In **John 6:38** Jesus said, *“For I have come down from heaven, not to do My own will, but the will of Him who sent Me.”*
- Jesus also set aside His knowledge as to when He would sit upon the throne of David. He said in **Matthew 24:36**, *“But of that day and hour no one knows, not even the angels of heaven, nor the Son, but the Father alone.”*
- He also temporarily set aside His eternal riches. In **2 Corinthians 8:9** we read, *“For you know the grace of our Lord Jesus Christ, that though He was rich, yet for your sake He became poor, so that you through His poverty might become rich.”*
- Lastly, He temporarily, for a brief moment, gave up His intimate fellowship with the Father as He took upon Himself the judgement for our sins. In **Matthew 27:46** we hear Jesus’ cry from upon the cross *“saying, ‘Eli, Eli, Lama Sabachthani?’ that is, ‘My God, My God, why have You forsaken Me?’”*

The Creator took on the form of the created. He was completely God and completely man when He was nailed to the cross.

Jesus became a bond-servant, a willing servant to the Father. He owned nothing, including His own life; He carried other people’s burdens, including our judgement for our sin upon the cross; He did the Father’s will, not His own; He came to serve, not to be served. He humbled Himself.

CONCERNING HIS CROSS

We are told in **Philippians 2:8**, that *“Being found in the appearance as a man, He humbled Himself by becoming obedient to the point of death, even death on a cross.”* I think it is important to keep in mind that no one took His life, but rather He gave it. In **John 10:17-18** Jesus said, *“For this reason the Father loves Me, because I lay down My life so that I may take it again. No one has taken it away from Me, but I lay it down on My own initiative. I have the authority to lay it down, and I have the authority to take it up again. This commandment I received from My Father.”*

God the Father sent God the Son to the cross. *“For God so loved the world, that He gave His only begotten Son, that whoever believes in Him shall not perish, but have eternal life”* (**John 3:16**). We have a problem. We sinned against God. *“For all have sinned and fall short of the glory of God”* (**Romans 3:23**). And, as we are told in **Romans 6:23**, *“the wages of sin is death.”* There was a price to pay for our sin and that price was death – eternal condemnation and separation from God. Yet we are told in **Romans 6:23**, *“but the free gift of God is eternal life in Christ Jesus our Lord.”* Jesus paid the price. He took upon Himself our judgment for our sin upon the cross. In **Romans 5:8-9** we are told, *“But God demonstrates His own love towards us, in that while we were yet sinners, Christ died for us. Much more then, having now been justified by His blood, we shall be saved from the wrath of God through Him.”* All we need to do is confess with our mouth Jesus as Lord, and believe in our heart that God raised Him from the dead, and we will be saved (**Romans 10:9-10**).

People must either willfully chose to reject Him or willfully choose to accept Him. There is no other way. Jesus said in **John 14:6**, *“I am the way, and the truth, and the life; no one comes to the Father but through Me.”*

If we want to experience the joy God wants us to experience, then we must humble ourselves by asking His forgiveness for our sins. We must personally receive His gift of salvation by putting our faith in Jesus Christ. Then, we must walk with Him in humble obedience according to His Word. We must humbly desire His will to be done, not ours. We must have the same heart attitude of humility that Jesus had. Don’t turn off the switch that motivates us to maintain unity and joy by being arrogant and having a boastful pride.

CHAPTER THIRTEEN

PHILIPPIANS 2:9-11**JESUS HIGHLY EXALTED****Philippians 2:9-11**

“For this reason also, God highly exalted Him, and bestowed on Him the name which is above every name, so that at the name of Jesus every knee will bow, of those who are in heaven and on earth and under the earth, and that every tongue will confess that Jesus Christ is Lord, to the glory of God the Father.”

Before we look at this passage in **Philippians 2:9-11**, I want to look at **Isaiah 45:22-23**. Notice what God said through the prophet Isaiah. He said, *“Turn to Me and be saved, all the ends of the earth; for I am God, and there is no other. I have sworn by Myself, the word has gone forth from My mouth in righteousness and will not turn back, that to Me every knee will bow, every tongue will swear allegiance.”* For God to offer salvation to the ends of the earth is one thing, but to have every knee bow before Him is quite another. How would God accomplish such a thing from a world that has, for the most part, rejected Him as their God? God made that statement in Isaiah 700 years before He showed us how and when His word, which cannot be altered, would be accomplished. God said, *“For this reason also”* He *“highly exalted Him”* speaking of Jesus who was with God and who was God, and who emptied Himself and humbled Himself by entering the human race as our kinsmen-redeemer in fulfillment of Old Testament prophecy. It is because of Jesus and His willingness to humble Himself and go to the cross that God highly exalted Him. And, at the name of Jesus every knee will bow to the glory of God.

It is important to understand that God has put in motion divine principles that are documented in Scripture by which He operates and by which we are to conduct our lives. Those divine principles cannot be altered. Even God Himself adheres to them. One of those divine principles is illustrated by Jesus in **Philippians 2:5-11** and declared by Jesus in **Matthew 23:12**. He said, *“Whoever exalts himself shall be humbled; and whoever humbles himself shall be exalted.”*

When I was in corporate sales, I had the opportunity to pursue a very prestigious project. Over 50 architects from across the country submitted their qualification for this project. It came

down to just three architectural firms who were scheduled to make their final presentations, all on the same day. The architect that presented before me had just received the American Institute of Architects (AIA) architect of the year award. That award is the highest honor an architect can receive within his profession. It is like receiving the Oscar for best actor or actress. It is like winning the Olympic gold medal for your event. I was told later that this architect paraded around the room proudly showing off his award and letting the selection committee know that he was the best architect in the nation. I was told that he was like a proud peacock showing off its tail feathers. He won the project. However, just one year later he filed for chapter 11 bankruptcy. ***“Whoever exalts himself shall be humbled; and whoever humbles himself shall be exalted.”***

In **James 4:6** we are told, ***“But He gives a greater grace. Therefore it says, ‘God is opposed to the proud, but gives grace to the humble.’”*** In **James 4:10** it says, ***“Humble yourselves in the presence of the Lord, and He will exalt you.”*** In **I Peter 5:6** it says, ***“Therefore humble yourselves under the mighty hand of God, that He may exalt you at the proper time, casting all your anxiety on Him, because He cares for you.”*** ***“Whoever exalts himself shall be humbled; and whoever humbles himself shall be exalted.”*** That is a Biblical principle by which God works. Notice how this principle was applied in **Daniel 4:28-37** (please read).

Jesus also implemented this divine principle. Though He eternally existed in the form of God and was the second person of the Godhead, the Creator of all things, He humbled Himself by entering the human race and by becoming obedient to the Father, even to the point of death upon a cross. Jesus performed the lowest act of humiliation and received the highest act of exaltation. The Father highly exalted Him with a name that is above every name and with the highest form of reverence that glorified Himself.

WITH THE HIGHEST NAME

God elevated the name ***“Jesus”*** to the highest possible place of honor and authority. This is reinforced in **verse 11** as Paul presented His name, title and position when he said, ***“Jesus Christ is Lord.”*** Jesus is His name, which is the Greek and Latin translation of the Hebrew name ***“Jeshua”*** meaning ***“the LORD (Yahweh) is salvation.”*** Christ is His title, which is the Greek translation of the Hebrew word ***“Meshiah”*** or ***“Messiah”*** meaning ***“anointed One.”*** The word ***“Lord”*** describes His position as the majestic sovereign master of the universe, God the Creator, and the Lord of lords having all power and authority. As we are told in **Colossians 2:9-10**, ***“For in Him all the fullness of Deity dwells in bodily form, and in Him you have been made complete, and He is the head over all rule and authority.”***

Jesus is the name above every name that has ever been mentioned on earth or in heaven. In **Hebrews 1:3-4** we are told, ***“And He is the radiance of His glory and the exact representation of His nature, and upholds all things by the word of His power. When He had made purification of sins, He sat down at the right hand of the Majesty on high, having become as much better than the angels, as He has inherited a more excellent name than they.”*** It is ***“at the name of Jesus every knee will bow, of those who are in heaven and on earth and under the earth.”***

WITH THE HIGHEST REVERENCE

God exalted Jesus to a place where He would receive the highest reverence. He said in **Philippians 2:10**, *“at the name of Jesus every knee will bow of those who are in heaven.”* God is saying that all the holy angels, archangels, cherubim and seraphim, thrones and dominions and all those believers who love and serve Him will bow before Him in worship. All of heaven will bow before Jesus the One who created all things.

God said in **Philippians 2:10**, *“at the name of Jesus every knee will bow of those...on earth.”* In **Revelation 15:3-4** we are told, *“And they sang the song of Moses, the bond-servant of God, and the song of the Lamb (referring to Jesus), saying, ‘Great and marvelous are Your works, O Lord God, the Almighty; righteous and true are Your ways, King of the nations! Who will not fear, O Lord, and glorify Your name? For You alone are holy; for all the nations will come and worship before You, for Your righteous acts have been revealed.’”* There is a day coming when every person that walks this planet will glorify His name and bow before Him in humble adoration.

God went on to say in **Philippians 2:10**, *“at the name of Jesus every knee will bow...under the earth.”* This is a reference to the unsaved dead, the lost who have been buried without putting their faith in Christ and the fallen angels who have rejected Him and all who are waiting for their final judgement before God. As we are told in **Hebrews 9:27**, *“And inasmuch as it is appointed for men to die once and after this comes judgement.”* After death there is no hope for salvation. There are no second chances. As we are told in **Revelation 20:11-15**, *“Then I saw a great white throne and Him who sat on it, from whose presence earth and heaven fled away, and no place was found for them. And I saw the dead, the great and the small, standing before the throne, and books were opened; and another book was opened, which is the book of life; and the dead were judged from the things which were written in the books, according to their deeds. And the sea gave up the dead which were in it, and death and Hades gave up the dead which were in them; and they were judged, everyone of them according to their deeds. Then death and Hades were thrown into the lake of fire. This is the second death, the lake of fire. And if anyone’s name was not found written in the book of life, he was thrown into the lake of fire.”* Please understand that according to **John 5:22** the One who sits upon the great white throne in judgement is Jesus Christ. Everyone one will see who He truly is even those under the earth.

God said in **Philippians 2:10-11**, *“At the name of Jesus every knee will bow...and every tongue will confess that Jesus Christ is Lord.”* The word “confess” means to agree with God by acknowledging that Jesus Christ is Lord. In other words, acknowledging that He is the majestic sovereign master of the universe, God the Creator and the Lord of lords having all power and authority including the authority to pronounce eternal judgement.

The Lordship of Christ is the essence of Christianity and the basis for salvation. In **Romans 10:9** we are told *“that if you confess with your mouth Jesus as Lord, and believe in your heart that God raised Him from the dead, you will be saved; for with the heart a person believes, resulting in righteousness, and with the mouth he confesses, resulting in salvation.”*

John MacArthur said: *“When we come to Jesus for salvation, we come to the One who is Lord over all. Any message that omits this truth cannot be called the gospel. It is a defective message that presents a savior who is not Lord, a redeemer who does not demonstrate authority over*

sin, a weakened, sickly messiah who cannot command those he rescues. The gospel according to Jesus in nothing like that. It represents Jesus Christ as Lord and Savior and demands that those who would receive Him take Him for who He is” “Everyone who receives Him must surrender to His authority, for to say we receive Christ when in fact we reject His right to reign over us is utter absurdity. It is a futile attempt to hold onto sin with one hand and take Jesus with the other. What kind of salvation is it if we are left in bondage to sin?” (Taken from The Gospel According to Jesus by John MacArthur, Jr., pages 235-236. Copyright © 1994 by John MacArthur, Jr. Used by permission of Zondervan, www.zondervan.co.)

Here in **Philippians 2:11** God is emphatically stating that every person that has ever lived will confess Jesus as Lord, either as a part of their eternal salvation or as part of their eternal condemnation. The fact of the matter is this: Jesus is highly exalted as the majestic sovereign master of the universe, God the Creator of all things and the Lord of lords having all power and authority. That authority includes forgiving sin and offering salvation or to judge sin and pronounce eternal condemnation. The choice is yours. I have already made my choice. How about you?

GLORIFYING THE FATHER

As Jesus entered the City of Jerusalem on that Palm Sunday nearly 2000 years ago, we are told in **Matthew 21:9**, *“The crowds going ahead of Him, and those who followed, were shouting, ‘Hosanna (save now) to the Son of David; Blessed is He who comes in the name of the LORD; Hosanna in the highest!’”* For everyone who has never personally trusted Jesus Christ as their personal Savior and Lord, their prayer ought to be *“Hosanna to the son of David”* – Jesus, save me now! As we are told in **Romans 10:13**, *“for whoever will call on the name of the LORD will be saved.”* They need to personally ask for His forgiveness of their sin and receive Him as their Savior and Lord.

For every person who has already trusted Jesus Christ as their personal Savior and Lord, their cry ought to be *“Hosanna in the highest!”* We ought to be declaring to a lost world His gift of salvation. We ought to be telling people about the grace that God offers through Jesus Christ and His work of redemption upon the cross and about His resurrection from the dead and ascension into glory.

Jesus performed the lowest act of humiliation and received the highest act of exaltation all to the glory of God the Father. This is to be our goal as well. The ultimate result of our salvation is to live a life under the Lordship of Christ that brings honor and glory to the Father. O, may we declare: *“Hosanna (save now) to the Son of David.”* Lord Jesus! Save Now! What better way to exalt His name and to bring glory to the Father than to declare the very reason He came to earth and the very reason the Father gave Him a name that is above every name.

 CHAPTER FOURTEEN

PHILIPPIANS 2:12-13

SANCTIFICATION

Philippians 2:12-13

“So then, my beloved, just as you have always obeyed, not as in my presence only, but now much more in my absence, work out your salvation with fear and trembling; for it is God who is at work in you, both to will and to work for His good pleasure.”

Let’s review what we have learned so far in **Philippians 2:1-11** since it has a bearing on **Philippians 2:12-13**. So far Paul has unveiled the key to having joy within our Christian lives, our Christian relationships and within the Christian church. That key is unity. Without unity there is no joy, only tension and strife, etc. Paul instructed the church to make his **“joy complete” (verse 2)**. Then he shows us the things that will make any Christian leader’s joy complete; pastor’s, elders, teachers, committee chairs, parents, etc. Paul tells us what those things are that maintains the unity that leads to joy in every Christian’s life.

In **verse 1**, Paul gave us 4 factors that should motivate us to maintain the unity that God gives us. They include:

- The **“encouragement”** we have **“in Christ”** as we spend time with Him in His Word and in prayer.
- The **“comfort from His love”** that He so graciously gives.
- The **“fellowship of the Spirit”** that lives in us as a result of our faith in Christ, teaching us truth and guiding us in our walk with the Lord.
- The **“affection and compassion”** given to us by God when we place our faith in Christ.

These 4 factors should motivate us to maintain the unity that God has given us, which leads to the joy.

Then, in **verse 2**, Paul gave us 4 essential principles that form a circle of unity that leads to joy. Those 4 principles consist of **“being of the same mind”** which is based upon Biblical thinking which leads to **“maintaining the same love”** as taught in the Bible and given to us by God. **“Maintaining the same love”** which leads to being **“united in spirit.”** And, being **“united in spirit”** which leads to being **“intent on one purpose”** which again leads to **“being of the same**

mind.” When that circle of unity is broken, then joy is diminished within our lives, within our relationships and within the church.

In **verses 3-4**, Paul gave us 4 interrelated conditions that must be achieved in order to put the circle of unity in motion. Those 4 interrelated conditions consist of:

- Doing **“nothing from selfishness.”** We are not to have a prideful attitude that pushes for its own way.
- Doing nothing from **“empty conceit.”** We are not to pursue self-glorification. We are not to think more highly of yourself than you ought.
- With **“humility of mind we are to regard one another as more important than ourselves.”**
- And, we are told to **“not merely look out for our own interests, but also for the interests of others.”**

These 4 conditions puts the circle of unity in motion which in turn leads to joy. In other words, you cannot be of the same mind, maintain the same love, be united in spirit or be intent on one purpose if you are selfish, seeking self-glorification and only have your own interests in mind.

Then, in **verses 5-8**, Paul gave us the switch that turns it all on. Paul told us to have the same attitude that Jesus had and that attitude is humility. A prideful heart does not create unity, nor does it produce joy in the lives of others.

Paul not only told us to have the attitude of humility like Christ, but he also gave us an illustration of how Jesus demonstrated that attitude of humility. Paul said He humbled Himself and left heaven to enter the human race as a bond-servant which included going to the cross for you and me in obedience to His Father.

Until people get their self off the throne and put Christ on the throne of their lives there cannot be unity and there will not be any joy. Until people truly have the attitude of humility like Christ and say, **“Lord, not my will be done but Your will be done”** there cannot be any unity or joy, because the flesh wars against the Spirit of God. We cannot have the interest of others in mind, we cannot be intent on one purpose and we cannot be in harmony with God when we are driven by selfishness. Personal pride and selfishness is the opposite of Christlike humility.

In **verses 9-11**, Paul revealed a Biblical principle that Jesus implemented. The Biblical principle was stated by Jesus in **Matthew 23:12**. He said, **“Whoever exalts himself shall be humbled; and whoever humbles himself shall be exalted.”** As a result of Jesus performing the lowest act of humiliation He received from His Father the highest act of exaltation. In **Philippians 2:9-11** we are told, **“For this reason also, God highly exalted Him, and bestowed on Him the name which is above every name, so that at the name of Jesus every knee will bow, of those who are in heaven and on earth and under the earth, and that every tongue will confess that Jesus Christ is Lord, to the glory of God the Father.”** Humility is the switch that turns on unity that leads to joy. Pride, selfishness and self-glorification is the switch that turns it off.

That brings us to **Philippians 2:12-13**, which starts with the phrase **“So then”**. This opening phrase brings our attention back to the preceding statements. In other words, since **“Jesus Christ is Lord to the glory of God the Father,”** then our response to Jesus as the Lord of our lives is to humble ourselves and obey the Father just as Jesus did. We are to let God work in and through our lives for His glory just as Jesus did. As a result of our salvation we are set apart from this

world in Christ for the sacred purposes of God the Father. Therefore, we are to let Him do His work in us and through us. That process is called “*sanctification*.”

In the preceding verses Jesus was our great example of humility, submission and obedience. Now we are told how to put our Lord’s example into practice. As we do, we find that we have a part in the process and God has a part in the process.

OUR PART

In **verses 12** we are given our part. It says, “*So then, my beloved, just as you have always obeyed, not as in my presence only, but now much more in my absence, work out your salvation with fear and trembling.*” The phrase “*work out your salvation*” does not suggest that we work for our salvation. **Ephesians 2:8-9** makes it very clear that salvation is not a result of works. The term “*work out*” in the Greek (“*katergazomai*”) means, “*work to full completion.*” In Paul’s day, the term referred to working in a mine to get out of it all the valuable ore, the mine was worked to full completion. It was also referred to working in a field to get the full and complete harvest. God has a plan for your life and mine in Christ. He wants to work that plan in our lives and through our lives to its full completion.

When I was a teenager my father wanted me to mine for gold with him in Holcomb Valley near Big Bear, California. He wanted me to go with him every weekend for the entire summer. I was not very excited about giving up weekends during the summer to dig in the dirt with my dad, but it was important to him so I did it.

We found a spot where my dad was sure we would find the mother-load. We had mental images of all the pots of gold we would find. We worked that spot every weekend for the entire summer. I am sure we got every flake of gold out of that particular area. We worked until there was no more to gain. I worked with my dad until we fully completed his goals for that summer. I figure we put in about 380 hours between the two of us. Figuring the price of gold at that time we each made about 50 cents an hour for the summer. Obviously we did not discover the mother-load, but I discovered something else. I discovered that the digging for gold was not the real goal that my dad had in mind. He wanted to build in me certain character traits. He wanted me to learn what it meant to set a goal and then diligently pursue it until it was fully completed, even when the results were small. He wanted me to learn the value of integrity by making a commitment and sticking to it. He wanted to teach me what hard work was really like and he wanted me to learn the value of teamwork. I did not know it at the time, but I was learning a Biblical principle called “*katergazomai*” – work to full completion.

Our Heavenly Father wants to do the same with each of us as His children in Christ. God wants you and me until we learn what His goals and purposes are and then, together with Him, diligently pursue those purposes to their full completion. God wants you and me to learn the value of spiritual integrity by keeping our commitments that we have made to Him – He wants to see us stick it out to the end, to full completion. He wants us to learn what hard work means in the context of His kingdom, even when there are little results to show for it. He wants us to learn the value of teamwork, working with Him for His kingdom. As a result of our salvation He has set us apart from this world for His purposes and we are to let Him work in us and through us until the work is fully completed. That is the process called sanctification.

God wants to develop godly character traits within our lives as well. Through our salvation He has *“rescued us out of the domain of darkness, and transferred us to the kingdom of His beloved Son.”* We are told that in **Colossians 1:13-14**. As a result, He wants us to learn and to live in a new way according to His righteousness or according to His character traits, which results in sanctification. In **Romans 6:19** Paul said, *“...present your members as slaves to righteousness, resulting in sanctification.”*

Our lives in Christ have great potential and God wants to enable us to fulfill that potential. He wants us to achieve His purposes in our walk with Christ. Therefore, we must be willing to roll up our sleeves and go to work for Him. We must discern what God’s will is for our lives, understand what our spiritual gifting is and then do it. We are to pursue the passion that God by His Holy Spirit has placed in us.

Paul said to *“work out your salvation”* (your sanctification) *“with fear and trembling.”* The word *“fear”* in the Greek language has two meanings. The first is *“fright”* or *“terror”* and the second is *“reverential awe.”* Both definitions are in Scripture. For example:

- In **Matthew 14:26** we are told, *“When the disciples saw Him walking on the sea, they were terrified, and said, ‘It is a ghost!’ And they cried out in fear.”*
- In **Acts 2:43** we are told, *“Everyone kept feeling a sense of awe; and many wonders and signs were taking place through the apostles.”*

I remember teaching an Adult Sunday school class on the subject, *“The Fear of the Lord.”* I focused on **Proverbs 8:13**. It says, *“The fear of the LORD is to hate evil; pride and arrogance and the evil way and the perverted mouth, I hate.”* My conclusion was that for us to truly fear the Lord we must hate evil and before we can hate evil we must see God as being absolutely holy and stand in reverential awe of His holiness. After the class one of my friends, a seminary graduate and my tutor in New Testament Greek, said to me, *“Dave, I don’t disagree with anything that you said. However, you only gave us one side of the coin that shows us the fear of the Lord.”* He went on to say, *“There is a healthy fear in understanding the fact that God is an all consuming fire and we should tremble. Because of that we should bow before Him in reverential awe.”* He was correct.

Such fear protects us against complacency, stubbornness, or any sinful attitude that prevents Him from working in our lives to accomplish His purposes. In **Isaiah 66:2** God said, *“For My hand made all these things, thus all these things came into being, declares the LORD. But to this one I will look, to him who is humble and contrite of spirit, and who trembles at My word.”* When is the last time you trembled at the Word of God? Far too often we take an apathetic attitude towards His Word. We must keep in mind that by His Word He spoke all of creation into existence according to **Psalms 33:6-9**. According to **Isaiah 11:4** He will slay the wicked by the breath of His lips. In **1 Thessalonians 4:16-17** and **1 Corinthians 15:52**, *“the Lord Himself will descend from heaven with a shout, with the voice of an archangel”* and *“in a moment, in the twinkling of an eye, at the last trumpet...the dead will be raised imperishable and we will be changed.”* We who are in Christ will be changed from mortal beings to immortal beings by the power of His Word. In **Hebrews 4:12** we are told, *“For the word of God is living and active and sharper than any two-edged sword, and piercing as far as the division of soul and spirit, of both joints and marrow, and able to judge the thoughts and intentions of the heart.”*

If He says, “*work out your salvation,*” then we had better do it with fear and trembling, or invite His discipline into our lives.

He will have His way! Therefore, I must trust and obey for there is no other way. Because I am saved by the grace of God through faith in Christ, then there is a good work that He wants me to do for Him (**Ephesians 2:10**) and I must do it until it is fully completed.

GOD’S PART

When I trust and obey, then I have the assurance as Paul said in **Philippians 2:13**, “*for it is God who is at work in you, both to will and to work for His good pleasure.*” The word “*work*” in the Greek is the word “*energeō*” from which we get our English word “*energy*.” In this passage it refers to God being the One who energizes us to accomplish His will and His work. We cannot do His will or His work by our own efforts or resources. The energy He gives us to accomplish His will and His work comes from the power of His indwelling Holy Spirit. It is God’s divine energy working in us and through us that accomplish His purposes. That was Paul’s testimony in **Colossians 1:29** when he said, “*...I labor, striving according to His power, which mightily works within me.*”

Paul said, “*it is God who is at work in you, both to will and to work.*” The word “*will*” in the Greek means “*to desire.*” It is God who places within us by His Holy Spirit the desire or the passion to do His work. God works in us before He can work through us. God works in us as the Holy Spirit takes the Word of God to teach us, reprove us, correct us and equip us so we can accomplish His work (**2 Timothy 3:16-17**). I’ll be very candid: Without us feeding upon the Word of God we will spiritual shrivel up like a prune and become ineffective for the kingdom of God. We won’t be able to do His will or His work, nor will we even have a desire to do it. The Spirit of God works in us using the Word of God. As we are told in **1 Thessalonians 2:13**, “*...the word of God...performs its work in you who believe.*” However, before that happens we need to get into the Word on a consistent basis.

God calls us to obey, then empowers our obedience. He calls us to serve, then empowers us to serve. He calls us to holiness, then empowers us to pursue holiness – our sanctification. Therefore, we need to let God do His work. We need to let Him energize us by His Spirit through His Word to accomplish His purposes in and through our lives according to His good pleasure for His glory. That includes everything that we have learned so far in Philippians Chapter Two. It is all part of sanctification.

CHAPTER FIFTEEN

PHILIPPIANS 2:14-16

LIGHTS IN THE WORLD

Philippians 2:14-16

“Do all things without grumbling or disputing; so that you will prove yourselves to be blameless and innocent, children of God above reproach in the midst of a crooked and perverse generation, among whom you appear as lights in the world, holding fast the word of life, so that in the day of Christ I will have reason to glory because I did not run in vain nor toil in vain.”

The Lord brought me to **Philippians 2:14-16** shortly after I put my faith in Jesus Christ as my personal Savior and Lord. At the time I was working for an architectural firm in downtown Los Angeles. I was at my desk drawing up the architectural plans for a new building when I received a call from the General Manager of the company where I worked. As I have mentioned before, a coworker and I wanted to start a lunchtime Bible study within the company. Two other managers had already put a stop to it and now the whole matter was before the General Manager. My coworker had assured me that when the time came for me to meet with the General Manager all I had to do was let him know and he would stop whatever he was doing and pray.

The time had come. I immediately went to where my friend worked to get him praying. Unfortunately he was not at his desk and nobody knew where he was. So I did what I did best in those days – I grumbled. I mean I really grumbled, saying some rather unkind things about my brother in Christ. Things like, “Does this guy still work here?” “This guy wastes more time than anyone I know.” “He’s never around when you need him.” All the way back to my desk I was in a big huff and I grumbled all the way.

When I got back to my desk I decided to do the spiritual thing and read my Bible before I went to see the General Manager. So, I grumbled about that as well, saying something like, “I don’t even know where to begin.” “I don’t know why I even bother.” Have you ever had thoughts like that? Well, I threw open my Bible to read wherever it fell open. I looked down at the page and began to read the first thing that caught my eye. This is what I read, **Philippians 2:14-16**. *“Do all things without grumbling or disputing; so that you will prove yourselves to be blameless and innocent, children of God above reproach in the midst of a crooked and perverse gen-*

eration, among whom you appear as lights in the world, holding fast the word of life, so that in the day of Christ I will have reason to glory because I did not run in vain nor toil in vain." It was like the Lord had picked up a two by four and whacked me across the forehead. I had an instant attitude adjustment.

As I have already mentioned, the General Manger approved our Bible study. My coworker and I became lights for Jesus in a high-rise building in downtown Los Angeles. However, before I could be a light in the world, God had to deal with the attitude of my heart and He did.

However, there is more to this passage in Philippians and more to the statement ***“Do all things without grumbling or disputing”*** than just making a basic attitude adjustment. It has to do with our respect for God as He works in us ***“both to will and to work for His good pleasure”*** as stated in the preceding verse. This passage has a bearing upon us proving to a crooked and perverse generation that we are indeed children of God. It has a profound affect on our testimony as lights in the world for Jesus. This passage determines whether our lights are on or off for Jesus. I want my light for Jesus to be a floodlight, how about you?

Notice that **Verse 15** begins with the words, ***“so that.”*** In other words, Paul is giving us the reason why we are to ***“do all things without grumbling or disputing”*** and that reason is this: so we ***“appear as lights in the world.”*** When we are lights in the world people see Jesus through us – through our actions, our words and our attitudes.

LIGHTS OFF

The Greek word for ***“grumbling”*** can also be translated ***“complaining”*** as it is in other translations of the Bible. The Greek word for ***“disputing”*** can also be translated ***“arguing.”*** In **1 Timothy 2:8** it is translated as ***“dissension.”***

I cannot think of anything that hides our light for Jesus quicker than when we grumble or complain and argue. The reason I say that is because when we grumble, complain and argue guess where peoples attention is focused. It is focused on us and not on Jesus. Our light for Jesus is turned off when we grumble, complain and argue. People look at Christians who have rotten attitudes and they say, ***“Why do I need Jesus?”*** Instead of them being drawn to Jesus they are pushed away from Jesus.

I am always amazed how quickly things irritate me and cause me to grumble or complain. It seems as though I always pick the slowest checkout line at the grocery store and I complain. I get into the fast lane when driving and it seems that I always end up behind someone that is going 10 miles an hour slower than the speed limit and I complain. It seems that when I am in a hurry to get to a meeting I hit every red light and I complain. I go to a fast food restaurant and if it takes more than three minutes to get my food I complain. I complain if I have too much to do and I complain if I don't have enough to do. Do you find yourself doing similar things?

God sometimes needs to hit us right between the eyes to get our attention. I was driving with my daughter in the car and I started complaining about some inconvenience in my life. She responded and said, ***“If you got a problem with God's sovereign will for your life why don't you talk to Him about it?”*** WOW! Talk about getting hit between the eyes. It is He who works in me both to will and to work for His good pleasure and I have no right to grumble, complain or argue

about any of it. Notice what we are told in **Isaiah 45:9**. It says, *“Woe to the one who quarrels with his Maker – an earthenware vessel among the vessels of earth! Will the clay say to the potter, ‘What are you doing?’ Or the thing you are making say, ‘He has no hands?’”* God wants us to get our eyes off of ourselves and focus on Jesus so we are lights in the world.

Jesus said in **Acts 1:8**, *“you shall be My witnesses both in Jerusalem, and Judea and Samaria, and even to the remotest part of the earth.”* The question is: What kind of witnesses are we? God has challenged me on this as well. It is clear, He wants us to *“appear as lights in the world.”*

When we grumble, complain and argue what we are really saying? We are saying, *“It’s all about me getting my way, or I am not happy with God’s way.”* Whenever I complain, I have, at that moment, taken my eyes off of the Lord and His working in my life. Grumbling or complaining is a negative emotional reaction to God’s providential will and the circumstances He allowed to come into my life. Disputing or arguing is a negative intellectual response to what God has allowed to happen in my life in order for Him to accomplish His purposes. Grumbling, complaining and arguing are all at the heart of discontentment. And discontentment always says, *“I am not happy with what God is doing in my life.”* *“Woe to the one who quarrels with his Maker.”*

That was what the Israelites did to God and to Moses. Their deliverance out of 400 years of slavery in Egypt was barely over when they started grumbling, complaining and arguing. They saw themselves trapped between pharaoh’s army and the Red Sea and they grumbled. They took their eyes off of the all-powerful God of Israel. They put their eyes on the obstacles rather than on the One who could remove the obstacles. They grumbled, complained and argued for forty years, even though God miraculously provided for their every need: water, food, shelter and clothing. Their grumbling, complaining and arguing brought God’s discipline into their lives (**1 Corinthians 10:6-13**) and it will do the same in our lives. God is not looking for gripes – He is looking for lights.

LIGHTS ON

We are told in **Philippians 2:14-15**, *“Do all things without grumbling or disputing; so that you will prove yourselves to be blameless and innocent, children of God above reproach in the midst of a crooked and perverse generation, among whom you appear as lights in the world.”* The word *“blameless”* describes a Christian’s life that cannot be criticized by unbelievers. The word *“innocent”* describes a Christian life that has an unadulterated devotion to doing God’s will. The phrase *“above reproach”* describes a life style that an unbelieving world cannot find fault with. The character of the Christian should be above any legitimate blame, criticism or censure. In short, we are to be Christlike, we are to be lights in the world.

We are to stop grumbling, complaining and arguing, and start living our lives in such a way that this crooked and perverse generation, in which we live, will see that we are indeed children of God to the glory of God. We are to be lights in the world for Jesus. In **verse 16**, we are told to *“hold fast the word of life.”* As lights in the world we are to share with others the redeeming word that brings eternal life. We are to share the eternal Word of God, His Holy Scriptures, and we are to share Jesus Christ, who gives eternal life to all who believe in Him.

In **Ephesians 5:8** we are told, “...*you were formerly darkness, but now you are light in the Lord; walk as children of light.*” How do we walk as children of light? We are told in **Ephesians 5:9-10**, “*(for the fruit of the light consists in all goodness and righteousness and truth), trying to learn what is pleasing to the Lord.*” What is pleasing to the Lord in order for us to be lights in the world? That we “*Do all things without grumbling or disputing; so that you will prove yourselves to be blameless and innocent, children of God above reproach in the midst of a crooked and perverse generation, among whom you appear as lights in the world, holding fast the word of life.*” This is God’s good pleasure. This is His will and the work that He wants to perform in us and through us. When we look up at heaven on a dark night we want to see stars. When God looks down on this dark world He wants to see lights – you and me.

In **Matthew 5:14-16** Jesus said to His disciples, “*You are the light of the world. A city set on a hill cannot be hidden; nor does anyone light a lamp and put it under a basket, but on the lampstands, and it gives light to all who are in the house. Let your light shine before men in such a way that they may see your good works, and glorify your Father who is in heaven.*” We are to be moral and spiritual luminaries who radiate godly character qualities, God’s truth, and the word of life in the midst of a crooked and perverse generation. The question we must ask ourselves, in light of God’s Word and God’s purposes for our life, is this: Is our light on or off for Jesus? Every time we have an opportunity to complain, let’s give thanks to the Lord instead. Every opportunity that we have to complain is an opportunity to be a light in the world.

CHAPTER SIXTEEN

PHILIPPIANS 2:17-18

SHARING JOY WITH ONE ANOTHER

Philippians 2:17-18

“But even if I am being poured out as a drink offering upon the sacrifice and service of your faith, I rejoice and share my joy with you all. You too, I urge you, rejoice in the same way and share your joy with me.”

Paul made an important transition from **verses 14-16** to **verses 17-18**. He went from saying, **“Do all things without grumbling or disputing; so that...you appear as lights in the world”** to saying, **“rejoice...and share your joy.”** I believe that Paul wanted the pendulum in the church to swing from grumbling and disputing to rejoicing and sharing joy with one another.

There is a reason why Paul wanted Christians to rejoice and share their joy with one another. When we rejoice and share our joy, it brings encouragement and excitement to the church, our families and our personal relationships. As the apostle John said in **3 John 4**, **“I have no greater joy than this, to hear of my children walking in the truth.”** Joy energizes our own individual lives and the church as a whole. Joy also becomes a magnet that draws people to Jesus. Being lights in the world generates joy in our lives and we are to share that joy with one another. We are to tell one another what Jesus is doing in our lives.

As a result of my coworker and I teaching a lunchtime Bible study, in a high-rise building in downtown Los Angeles, the news about our faith traveled throughout the building. One day I was waiting for my wife after work in the building’s lobby. It was about 5:00 PM and the lobby was full of people getting off the elevators and making their way to their transportation home. As I stood there I heard someone yelling *“Dave – Dave.”* On the other side of the lobby I saw a young woman running towards me weaving in-between the people. I had no clue who she was. I looked around and it became clear she was headed right for me. While still on the run she grabbed me and gave me a big hug. My immediate thought was I hope my wife isn’t looking because this is going to be hard to explain. This young woman, without even introducing herself said, *“The greatest thing happened to me today and I couldn’t wait to tell someone about it. I asked Jesus into my heart today. I asked Jesus to be my personal Savior and Lord.”* I want you to

know something. I was rejoicing and all the angels in heaven were rejoicing with that young woman. She became a child of God and she wanted every one to know. Being lights in the world generates joy in our lives and we are to share that joy with one another. We are to share what Jesus is doing in our lives. It brings encouragement and excitement. It energizes our personal lives.

In **Philippians 2:17-18** Paul said, *“But even if I am being poured out as a drink offering upon the sacrifice and service of your faith, I rejoice and share my joy with you all. You too, I urge you, rejoice in the same way and share your joy with me.”* Paul was speaking to the entire church. He wanted every born again Christian, regardless of their circumstances, to rejoice in the Lord and share their joy.

Paul was chained to a Roman soldier twenty-four hours a day seven days a week. He did not know what the outcome of his trial would be, whether he would live or die for his faith. He longed to hear what Jesus was doing in the church and in the lives of people. He wanted them to share their joy with him. He too wanted to be encouraged.

Paul said, *“...even if I am being poured out as a drink offering upon the sacrifice and service of your faith.”* Paul used an analogy referring to one of the earliest offerings made in the Old Testament (**Genesis 35:4**). In Old Testament times, when a person made an offering or sacrifice to the Lord, other than a sin offering, they would pour wine upon the offering. The wine was to symbolize joy indicating that the sacrifice was done with a joyful heart and with the intent to bring joy to the Lord. This was the truth that Paul was teaching the Philippians. Paul saw his life as a drink offering being poured out in sacrifice and service to the church, and it was being done with a joyful heart and with the desire to bring joy to the Lord and to other believers. Because he was found worthy to make a sacrifice and serve the Lord and His church, he rejoiced and shared his joy with others. Paul wanted all Christians to do the same. So he said, *“...I rejoice and share my joy with you all. You too, I urge you, rejoice in the same way and share your joy with me.”*

REJOICE LIKE PAUL

Throughout Paul's letter to the Philippians he shared with them what he rejoiced in, as an example for them to follow. For example:

- In **Philippians 1:18**, Paul rejoiced that Christ was being proclaimed. He rejoiced even though the methods used and motives behind the methods were not the best. He said, *“...whether in pretense or truth, Christ is proclaimed; and in this I rejoice.”* Every one of us ought to rejoice when Christ is proclaimed and people respond to the gospel. My grandson Elijah, when he was five years old, asked Jesus into his heart. His mom and dad rejoiced. I rejoiced. Our whole family rejoiced along with Jesus and all the angels in heaven. I rejoiced when our church shared Jesus with the homeless and two prayed and asked Jesus to be their Savior and Lord. I rejoiced when our youth group did a VBS with another church in south-central Los Angeles and ten kids prayed to receive Christ. I get excited, encouraged, and energized when I hear how Christ is being proclaimed, when people receive Him as Savior and Lord and when people grow in their faith.
- The Philippian church sent Epaphroditus to minister to Paul in Rome. In **Philippians 2:28**, we are told that Paul sent Epaphroditus back to the Philippian church, so that when they saw him again they would rejoice. In a similar way we send missionaries out from

our congregations and when they return there is a great rejoicing. We rejoice when we hear what the Lord is doing. We get excited, encouraged and energized when we them face to face.

- In **Philippians 3:1** Paul said, “...*rejoice in the Lord.*” In **Philippians 4:4** he said, “*Rejoice in the Lord always; again I will say rejoice!*” We can rejoice in the Lord when we walk obediently with Him according to His Word serving Him and His church with our spiritual gifts. Our greatest joy as Christians comes at the point of our greatest service to Christ. You know why? Because serving Christ and His church for His glory is the supreme purpose for our existence. When we are serving Jesus using our spiritual gifts with right methods and right motives, the Holy Spirit within us leaps for joy causing our own hearts to be filled with joy. That’s what it means to rejoice in the Lord. Joy is the fruit of the Holy Spirit (**Galatians 5:22**) overflowing from our obedient hearts. It was no different with Paul.
- In **Philippians 4:10**, Paul rejoiced in the fact that they revived their concern for him through their financial support. There is always cause to rejoice when the people in the church are concerned enough about the ministry that Jesus is doing through the church that they give their financial support.

When we serve Christ together, then we should rejoice together in the same way that Paul rejoiced with the Philippians church.

SHARE YOUR JOY

Paul also encouraged the church to share their joy with him in the same way that he shared his joy with them. For example:

- In **Philippians 1:3-5**, Paul told the Philippians that every time he thought of them he offered joyful prayers to the Lord because of their partnership in the gospel.
- In **Philippians 1:25**, Paul was excited that through his ongoing ministry that he could help the church grow in their faith and bring the church joy as well.
- In **Philippians 2:2**, Paul encouraged the church to make his joy complete by “*by being of the same mind, maintaining the same love, united in spirit, intent on one purpose.*”
- In **Philippians 2:29**, Paul encouraged the church to receive Epaphroditus “*in the Lord with all joy.*”
- In **Philippians 4:1**, Paul spoke of his anticipation to see his brothers and sister in Christ who were in Philippi and who brought him joy. Seeing brothers and sisters in Christ that you have not seen in a while is incredibly joyful.

Paul said, “*I rejoice and share my joy with you all. You too, I urge you, rejoice in the same way and share your joy with me.*”

A friend of mine called me. He said, “*This is a phone call I have been wanting to make for a long time.*” He said, “*I am going to work on Monday!*” We rejoiced together in what the Lord was doing in his life. As we talked we recalled how the Lord led him into a pastoral internship. As a result, he rented a house from one of the people in our church. Across the street from that house he met another Christian man who offered him a job. His heart for ministry and his internship all contributed to the decision that led him to a place where he was offered a job in the midst

of a very difficult economy. I get excited, encouraged and energized about ministry when people share their joy with me and I get to share my joy with them.

That is what God wants to see from everyone who has trusted Jesus Christ as their personal Savior and Lord. He wants to see joyful Christians rejoicing and sharing their joy with one another. He wants to see joy from His church. He wants to see a church that is excited, encouraged and energized by His Spirit.

- Jesus said in **John 15:11**, *“These things I have spoken to you so that My joy may be in you, and that your joy may be made full.”* I suggest you read John Chapter Fifteen to see what *“these things”* are that causes joy.
- In **John 16:24** Jesus said, *“Until now you have asked for nothing in My name; ask and you will receive, so that your joy may be made full.”* I suggest you read **Matthew 6:9-13** and start aligning your prayers with the Lord’s teaching and purposes. God wants us to come to His throne of grace and ask Him anything in the name of Jesus so we can see Him at work answering prayer, so that our joy will be made full.
- In **John 17:13** as Jesus prayed to His Father He said, *“But now I come to You; and these things I speak in the world so that they may have My joy made full in themselves.”* I suggest you read John Chapter Seventeen to see what *“these things”* are that causes joy.
- In **1 John 1:4** the apostle John said, *“These things we write, so that our joy may be made complete.”* I suggest you read 1 John to see what *“these things”* are that makes our joy complete.

As we read these passages something becomes very clear. If God and His Word are at the center of our lives, then being joyful is inevitable. If we have no joy, then one thing is very evident; we are out of fellowship with God and we need to repent and get back into fellowship with God. We need to rejoice and share our joy, not only for our sake, but also for one another’s sake and for the sake of God’s kingdom. Joy is the magnet that draws people to the church and to Christ. Joy is the fuel that fires the ministry of the church. Let’s rejoice. Share your joy with someone this week.

Parents, share your joy in the Lord with your children. They need to hear and see what Jesus is doing in your life. Children, youth, instead of complaining about your parents share what Jesus is doing in your life with them. They need to hear and see what Jesus is doing in your life. Spouses, instead of complaining about one another share with one another what Jesus is doing in your life. I think you will find that you’ll become encouraged, excited and energized when you rejoice and share your joy with one another.

CHAPTER SEVENTEEN

PHILIPPIANS 2:19-24**THE PROFILE OF A GODLY MAN****Philippians 2:19-24**

“But I hope in the Lord Jesus to send Timothy to you shortly, so that I also may be encouraged when I learn of your condition. For I have no one else of kindred spirit who will genuinely be concerned for your welfare. For they all seek after their own interests, not those of Christ Jesus. But you know of his proven worth, that he served with me in the furtherance of the gospel like a child serving his father. Therefore I hope to send him immediately, as soon as I see how things go for me; and I trust in the Lord that I myself also will be coming shortly.”

In **Philippians 2:18**, Paul told the Philippian church to rejoice and to share their joy with him. As we looked at that verse, we saw what happens when Christians rejoice and share their joy with one another. It brings encouragement and excitement to the church, our families and our personal relationships. It energizes the church as a whole as well as our own individual lives. Paul wanted to be encouraged. He wanted to hear what Jesus was doing within the church and in the lives of believers. So Paul decided to send Timothy to Philippi. In **Philippians 2:19** Paul said, *“But I hope in the Lord Jesus to send Timothy to you shortly, so that I also may be encouraged when I learn of your condition.”* In **verse 23** Paul said, *“Therefore I hope to send him immediately, as soon as I see how things go for me.”* Paul was not going to wait for them to send another messenger to him. He was going to send his on ambassador, who would report back to him the condition of the church. Paul was confident that when he heard Timothy’s report that he would be encouraged.

As Paul prepared to send Timothy, he reminded the church at Philippi of Timothy’s qualifications. In doing so, Paul described the profile of a godly man. As we look at Timothy’s godly character qualities, I also want us to see he had several key people influence his life in a godly way: his mother, his grandmother and the apostle Paul.

THOSE QUALITIES IN HIS LIFE

The first set of qualities is found in **verse 19** when Paul said, *“But I hope in the Lord Jesus to send Timothy to you shortly, so that I also may be encouraged when I learn of your condition.”* For Paul to send Timothy to Philippi, by himself, indicated that Timothy was trustworthy. He earned Paul’s confidence.

When I was in my management career I always assigned my most trusted people to the most important projects. I knew that I would sleep at night knowing the assignment would get done and get done well. I knew they could evaluate the situation, make decisions on my behalf, keep my best interest in mind and that they would keep me informed. This is the kind of value that Timothy brought to Paul. Timothy knew how Paul thought and he knew what was important to Paul. He could easily go anywhere as Paul’s ambassador, because he had earned Paul’s trust.

In my parenting years I told each of my children, *“Never break my trust.”* I told them, *“Once you break my trust, it will be very difficult to get it back.”* If they told me they were going some where or going to do something or be back at a certain time and they changed their mind they had better call me. When someone breaks our trust it sometimes takes years to regain that trust.

The same is true in marriage. One reason I had such a strong marriage for thirty years was because my wife and I never violated the trust we had for one another. We never did anything or said anything or put ourselves in any questionable position or compromising circumstance that would even hint that we violated our trust with one another. Timothy had that kind of relationship with Paul. He never violated Paul’s trust. I think Timothy learned the importance of trust as his mother and grandmother raised him.

Timothy also had spiritual discernment. Paul trusted Timothy’s ability to evaluate the condition of the church and give Paul an honest report. Paul knew he could trust Timothy’s judgement. He was dependable.

In **verse 20** Paul said, *“For I have no one else of kindred spirit who will genuinely be concerned for your welfare.”* Back in **Philippians 2:2**, Paul encouraged the church at Philippi to be of the same mind, maintain the same love, be united in spirit and intent on one purpose. That verse described Paul and Timothy’s relationship.

Notice what Paul said about Timothy in **2 Timothy 3:10-11**. He said, *“Now you followed my teaching, conduct, purpose, faith, patience, love, perseverance, persecutions and sufferings.”* Paul and Timothy were of kindred spirit. They were two peas in the same pod. They were like-minded. Timothy had the same concern for the spiritual well being of believers as Paul had. I think Timothy learned what it meant to be concerned about the spiritual well being of people from a mother, who was concerned about his spiritual well being.

Timothy was extremely valuable to Paul because they were like-minded. In **1 Corinthians 4:16-17** Paul said, *“Therefore I exhort you, be imitators of me. For this reason I have sent to you Timothy, who is my beloved and faithful child in the Lord, and he will remind you of my ways which are in Christ, just as I teach everywhere in every church.”* Timothy was Paul’s protégé. He was Paul’s disciple. He thought, walked and taught as Paul would. He imitated Paul as Paul imitated Christ (**1 Corinthians 11:1**). Timothy was a godly man who was prepared for God’s use.

This is reinforced in **Philippians 2:21** when Paul said, concerning the other Christians in Rome, *“For they all seek after their own interests, not those of Christ Jesus.”* That was a sad commentary on the spiritual condition of the Christians in Rome at that time. However, it rein-

forced Timothy's godly character. Timothy was concerned more about the things of Christ than he was about his own concerns. He made personal sacrifices for the kingdom of God. He followed Paul's teaching in **Philippians 2:4-5** when he said, *"do not merely look out for your own interests, but also the interests of others. Have this attitude in yourselves which was also in Christ Jesus."* Timothy was just as concerned about the spiritual condition of people as Paul was and as Jesus was. I want you to know something. As born again Christians we either live in **Philippians 1:21** or in **Philippians 2:21**. We either live for Christ or we live for ourselves. Timothy lived for Christ.

Paul said in **Philippians 2:22**, *"But you know of his proven worth, that he served with me in the furtherance of the gospel like a child serving his father."* Timothy had already established his reputation with Paul and with the church in Philippi. He served along side of Paul spreading the gospel and preaching the Word of God. He helped Paul start the Philippian church. His commitment to Paul and the Lord was unwavering. It stood the test of time and the test of adversity. The Greek word in this verse for *"proven worth"* (*"dokimē"*) carries with it the idea of *"being proven worthy after testing."* Timothy was a proven resource who had a good reputation.

THOSE WHO SHAPED HIS LIFE

I think there was an important reason why Timothy was a godly man prepared for God's use. In **Acts 16:1-2**, We are told *"Paul came also to Derbe and to Lystra. And a disciple was there, named Timothy, the son of a Jewish woman who was a believer, but his father was a Greek, and he was well spoken of by the brethren who were in Lystra and Iconium."* Timothy had a good reputation. There was a reason why he had a good reputation. There were two people who shaped his life in a way that made him a valuable resource for God's use. In **2 Timothy 1:5**, Paul said to Timothy, *"For I am mindful of the sincere faith within you, which first dwelt in your grandmother Lois and your mother Eunice, and I am sure that it is in you as well."* Apparently, Timothy's dad was out of the picture. He either abandoned his wife and child or he had passed away. We are not told what happened, but for all intent and purposes a single mom raised Timothy along with his grandmother who both loved the Lord.

Notice what Paul said to Timothy in **2 Timothy 3:14-15**. He said, *"You, however, continue in the things you have learned and become convinced of, knowing from whom you have learned them, and that from childhood you have known the sacred writings which are able to give you the wisdom that leads to salvation through faith which is in Christ Jesus."* Timothy's mom saturated him with the Scriptures from childhood. She taught him truth. She told him who the Messiah was. She taught him Biblical principles that shaped him into a godly man prepared for God's use.

Sometimes I take more credit than I should for the way my children have turned out. If I want to be completely honest, I must admit that they are who they are in Christ because they had a godly mother. They had a mother who lived Christ before them with unwavering faith, in word and in deed. They had a mom who dug deep within the Scriptures learning Biblical principles and she taught them to her children. They had a mom who dug deep within the Scriptures and taught them the truth about God and about Jesus and about walking with Him faithfully. When we went on vacation it was their mother who read Scripture as I dove the car or played a cassette

recording of some Bible story or turned to a Christian radio station that taught the Word or played Christian music. My children had a mom who gave up her time and drove them on a short-term mission trip to Baja California. They had a mom that not only sent them to the inner city of Los Angeles to minister to the homeless, but also took them to the inner city of Los Angeles. She demonstrated how to lovingly share their faith with the homeless. They had a mom who demonstrated how to walk with Jesus in the midst of adversity and even while facing death.

Mothers, are the key to preparing their children to be godly children, godly men and women prepared for God's use, teaching them the sacred writings – the Word of God. That is one job moms and dads too can always do with their children, whether they are young or whether they are grown.

Kids, whatever your age may be, whether you are one or a hundred and one, you should rise up and bless your mom. In **Proverbs 31:28-31** we are told, ***“Her children rise up and bless her; her husband also, and he praises her, saying: ‘Many daughters have done nobly, but you excel them all.’ Charm is deceitful and beauty is vain, but a woman who fears the Lord, she shall be praised. Give her the product of her hands, and let her works praise her in the gates.”*** A godly mom shaped Timothy's life into a godly man for God's use and she was blessed, and she was praised. Even Timothy's grandmother helped shape his life for God's use. God recorded both of their names within His eternal Word – they were blessed and they were praised.

Perhaps you have a spiritual mom in your life as I do. Margie Rich is not my biological mom, but she is my spiritual mom. I praise the Lord for giving me a spiritual mom that helped shaped my life for God's use. Godly mothers and grandmothers, should continue to shape their child or children for God's use. One day, they will rise up and call you blessed.

CHAPTER EIGHTEEN

PHILIPPIANS 2:25-30

THOSE HELD IN HIGH REGARD

Philippians 2:25-30

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

Can you think of someone that you hold in high regard, someone that you highly respect and give honor to in the Lord? What are some of the reason that you respect that person and hold them in such high regard? Paul identified such a man and presented him as an example of the kind of people we are to honor in the Lord. His name was Epaphroditus.

We know very little about Epaphroditus. We know nothing about his family, background, conversion, or even his specific duty in the church. Everything we know about this man is found in **Philippians 2:25-30** and **Philippians 4:18**. Yet Paul highly respected this man and presented him as an example of those we should hold in high regard. In **Philippians 2:25** Paul gave three reasons he held Epaphroditus in high regard and two reasons why the church at Philippi did the same. Paul said that he was my brother, my fellow worker and my fellow soldier, then speaking in reference to the church he said he was your messenger and your minister.

PAUL'S REASONS

Paul began by calling Epaphroditus *“my brother.”* Of course Paul was not referring to a biological brother, but rather a brother in Christ who, like all believers, was adopted into God's eternal

family through placing his faith in Jesus Christ as his personal Savior and Lord. Jesus emphasized that relationship in **Matthew 12:50** when He called His disciples His brothers and sisters.

Of course, being brothers and sisters in Christ has absolutely nothing to do with ones denominational ties or lack of denominational affiliation. Christians have become too enamored with the fact that they can say they are of a particular denomination or are nondenominational. What is important is whether Jesus can call us His brother or sister. What is important is whether we have been adopted into God's eternal family through receiving His Son and the reconciliation He offered through His work upon the cross and believing in His resurrection from the dead. Being a brother or sister in Christ has everything to do with our relationship with God's Son.

Epaphroditus was a brother in Christ. How did Paul know that? Well, Paul knew he was a brother in Christ because of his willingness to roll up his sleeves and go to work for the Lord. Paul saw his dedication to the Lord's work. That is why Paul called him my *"fellow worker."*

Epaphroditus was in partnership with God, building up the church and his kingdom just as Paul was. Paul and Epaphroditus had a common spiritual effort along with a common spiritual life. It is important to understand that every believer is called *"God's fellow workers"* in **1 Corinthians 3:9**. We are all to roll up our sleeves and do our part in building up the church and building God's kingdom.

I have had so many pastors, out of frustration, tell me that only 10% of their people do 100% of the work in their church. In other words, 90% of their congregation are not involved with building up the church or the kingdom of God. That is a sad commentary on the church today. The church should have an incredible reputation for Jesus. Every church should be known as a church that loves Jesus. Every church should be a serving church and a friendly church. Every church should have a reputation that says they are committed to doing the Lord's work in building up His church and building up His kingdom.

The Philippian church was that kind of church. They had an incredible reputation. People saw it from the very beginning when the church was founded and Lydia, the businesswoman from Thyatira, opened her home and the church was started. People heard of their reputation when the jailer risked his livelihood and his life by asking Paul *"what must I do to be saved?"* then took Paul and Silas out of the prison and into his home for dinner. Their reputation as an incredible church was seen as the church produced people like Epaphroditus, a brother in the Lord, a fellow worker and a fellow soldier for Christ.

Now, what did Paul mean when he called Epaphroditus a *"fellow soldier"*? We gain some insight into what Paul meant in **2 Timothy 2:3-4**. He said, *"Suffer hardship with me, as a good soldier of Christ Jesus. No soldier in active service entangles himself in the affairs of everyday life, so that he may please the one who enlisted him as a soldier."* A good soldier, from Paul's perspective, was one who willingly suffered hardship for Christ. Epaphroditus was certainly one of those people. In **Philippians 2:30** Paul said, *"...he came close to death for the work of Christ, risking his life to complete what was deficient in your service to me."* Epaphroditus was willing to stay with Paul and identify himself with Paul while Paul was chained to a Roman soldier. If Paul was executed for his faith by Caesar, then those who were with Paul would probably face the same consequences. Epaphroditus fought the good fight for Christ with Paul, defended the truth about Christ. Epaphroditus put on the full armor of God, as described in **Ephesians 6:10-20**, and stood

shoulder to shoulder with Paul against the flaming arrows of the evil one as a soldier for Christ. Epaphroditus was not entangled in the affairs of everyday life, so that it took him away from serving Christ and His church. Epaphroditus lived according to **Philippians 1:21** not **Philippians 2:21**. He did not seek after his own interests, but rather the interests of Christ and was willing to risk all to accomplish it. He was a fellow soldier for Christ with Paul. It is no wonder that the church at Philippi sent Epaphroditus as their messenger and minister to Paul.

PHILIPPI'S REASONS

Paul said in **Philippian 2:25**, that Epaphroditus was a messenger for the church. The Greek word used here for messenger is "*apostolos*" which is the same word used to describe the office of apostle held by the 12 apostles who were messengers delivering God's Word. The term is also used to describe a person, other than one of the twelve apostles, who fulfilled the role as a special messenger. Epaphroditus was a special messenger from the church at Philippi who was sent to Paul to deliver a financial gift as well as a special greeting from the church.

Epaphroditus would also be a special messenger for Paul, as Paul sent him back to the church at Philippi. Epaphroditus would carry Paul's letter to the church along with many personal stories about what the Lord was doing through Paul. However, Epaphroditus was more than just a messenger. He was also sent as a minister from the church at Philippi to minister to Paul's needs.

Epaphroditus was the most valuable gift that the Philippian church could give to Paul – self-giving, tireless, a hard worker, and a defender of truth, a risk taker willing to make sacrifices as a humble servant. He had courage. He was willing to go to Rome were Paul was imprisoned. It is obvious that the church trusted him without reservation. He met Paul's high moral and spiritual standards. He had a servant's heart. He had the best interests of others in mind. He was committed to serving Christ and His church. He was committed to building up kingdom of God.

It is no wonder that Paul held Epaphroditus up as an example of those who we should hold in high regard. Paul said in **Philippians 2:29**, "*Receive him then in the Lord with all joy, and hold men like him in high regard.*" We are told to hold in high regard our faithful brothers and sisters in Christ who are: Fellow workers building up the church and God's kingdom; Fellow soldiers for Christ proclaiming and defending the truth; Messengers and ministers for Christ encouraging other Christians and caring for the needs of God's people.

PERSONAL RE-EVALUATION

As I studied this passage I asked myself the following questions. I would encourage you to answer these questions as well:

- Am I making myself a valuable resource to Christ and His church by being available to do His work?
- Am I all about Jesus or am I so concerned about my own life and what I want to accomplish that I have taken my eyes off of Jesus and His work?
- Has Jesus taken a back seat in my life?
- Am I willing to risk all for Jesus?
- Am I willing to be a minister and a messenger for Christ no matter what the cost?

- Am I willing to be a worker and a soldier for Christ alongside other Christians?
- Do I think Jesus is holding me in high regard?
- Whom am I serving?
- Am I causing the church to rejoice because of what the Lord is accomplishing in and through my life?
- Do I need to reevaluate my priorities in life from a kingdom perspective?
- Who is the Lord of my life when no one is watching?
- Can Jesus call me His brother?
- Am I doing my part to build up the kingdom of God?
- Am I effectively using my spiritual gift to build up the church?
- Am I truly seeking ways to please the Lord?

I know how I did in answering those questions – how about you? How did you do?

As parents to our children or grandparents to our grandchildren, as children to our parents, as classmates, as workers and coworkers, as an employee or employer, as Christians who are lights in the world: Let us make a commitment to live our lives for Jesus in such a way that our peers as well as our Lord would hold us in high regard. Let's do it all for His glory.

Do you need to repent? Then do so now! Join me at the foot of the cross in prayer. Let's go to the throne of grace together. Let's purpose in our hearts today to live our lives for Jesus in such a way that our peers as well as our Lord would hold us in high regard for His glory.

CHAPTER NINETEEN

PHILIPPIANS 3:1-3**THE TRUE WORSHIPERS****Philippians 3:1-3**

“Finally, my brethren, rejoice in the Lord. To write the same things again is no trouble to me, and it is a safeguard for you. Beware of the dogs, beware of the evil workers, beware of the false circumcision; for we are the true circumcision, who worship in the Spirit of God and glory in Christ Jesus and put no confidence in the flesh,”

In **Philippians 3:1-3** Paul identified those who are true worshipers of God. He did that by making a contrast between those who were not true worshipers of God with those who were. Paul not only identified those who are true worshipers, but also what true worship entails.

Paul began Philippians Chapter Three by saying, *“Finally, my brethren, rejoice in the Lord. To write the same things again is no trouble to me, and it is a safeguard for you.”* I knew a pastor who preached the Word of God for 45 minutes and when he closed in prayer he reiterated what he had just preached while he prayed. That use to bother me, then I discovered, he was just being Biblical. Paul thought it a good thing to *“write the same things again.”* It was for their protection. What he restated and what he was going to restate several more time was this: *“Rejoice in the Lord.”* Paul wanted this message to sink in and especially as he wrote about worship. At the heart of true worship is our joy in Christ. We are to rejoice and express that joy back to the Lord as we worship Him.

REJOICE IN THE LORD

Paul’s command to *“rejoice in the Lord”* is very appropriate. Those who have by faith trusted Jesus Christ as Savior and Lord have every reason to rejoice and to worship Him from a joyful heart every day of the week, no matter how difficult their circumstances in life might be.

I think when Epaphroditus arrived back in Philippi and this letter was read to the Philippian church, the church would ask, *“Did Paul really do the things he is telling us to do? Did he really rejoice in the Lord while chained to a Roman soldier twenty-four hours a day seven days a week,*

not knowing if he would be put to death for his faith?” I am sure that Epaphroditus would give a personal testimony and say, *“Absolutely, he rejoiced in the Lord. Paul is a true worshiper of God.”* I think the jailer there in Philippi could say, *“I remember when I threw Paul and Silas into the inner dungeon of the prison and placed them in shackles with no food or water or light and they started singing praises to God at midnight.”* Paul could say, **“Rejoice in the Lord”** because he did it. True worshipers of God can rejoice in the Lord because they worship **“in the Spirit of God”** and one of the fruits of the Spirit is joy (**Galatians 5:22**).

A mark of a true worshiper of God is that they rejoice in the Lord, even though they suffer hardship. A true worshiper of God does not get drawn into Satan’s den to have a pity party. A true worshiper of God does not put **“confidence in the flesh”** or in themselves, but rather confidence in the One who created them, the One whom they worship – God Almighty. A true worshiper of God does not get drawn into a religion or religious act, but rather into a relationship with God Almighty. They worship in the Spirit of God and glory in Christ Jesus regardless of their circumstances. They rejoice in the Lord, which is an essential part of all true worship and should be at the heart of every true worshipers.

BEWARE

Paul told the Philippian church and he tells every church, in **Philippians 3:2**, to **“beware of the dogs, beware of the evil workers, beware of the false circumcision.”** This verse reveals the schemes, the devises, and the people that Satan uses to keep people from Christ or to persuade people to sin against God and thereby to draw them away from the true worship of God.

Paul refers to them as dogs, **“beware of the dogs.”** Paul gave us a word picture to describe their character. There is a group of people who oppose Christianity and they are like a pack of wild dogs that roam the streets trying to chase people away from the church. They are vicious and dangerous.

They use Satan’s schemes and devises to keep us away from the spiritual food contained in God’s Word. The old devil wants to prevent us from learning and growing in the truth. He attempts to distract us and keep us out of church and out of fellowship with God and one another. He does not want us to bow our hearts in worship the living God. As long as we are distracted from having time with the Lord or for the Lord, he has accomplished his plan.

Jesus gave a similar warning in **Matthew 7:15** when He said, **“Beware of the false prophets, who come to you in sheep’s clothing, but inwardly are ravenous wolves.”** This was a common concern that Paul had for all the churches. In **Acts 20:28-30** he said, **“Be on guard for yourselves and for all the flock, among which the Holy Spirit has made you overseers, to shepherd the church of God which He purchased with His own blood. I know that after my departure savage wolves will come in among you, not sparing the flock; and from among your own selves men will arise, speaking perverse things, to draw away the disciples after them.”** This is what the dogs do. They get between us and the Lord. They don’t want us to get what the Lord has for us in His Word and the blessings that come from serving Him. They bark out heresy. They attempt to confuse the issues. They keep us distracted. They attempt to rob us of our joy.

It is kind of like a dog chasing the mail person. As long as the mail person is concerned about getting bit by the dog the mail doesn't get delivered. They are distracted and even prevented from doing what they are supposed to do.

Satan will do anything to keep us away from Christ and His church. I think one of his greatest ploys is busyness. We have the kid's games to go to, deadlines to meet, people to see, places to go and things to do. We get so busy we don't have time to pray. We get so busy we don't spend time in His Word. We get so busy we don't have time to serve. We get so busy we don't have time to go to church. We think our job is so important that pretty soon Jesus gets squeezed or pushed out of our morning and then our day and then our week and then pretty soon we stop worshipping Him. Beware of the dog.

Paul also said in **verse 2**, "*beware of the evil workers.*" While the dogs try to keep us away from God, the evil workers try to get us to sin against God. These are the people, schemes and devises that Satan uses to promote ungodliness and immorality within our lives or within the church and thereby prevent the true worship of God. We cannot worship in the Spirit of God if we are sinning against God.

There is a movement within this country and around the world that is anti-Christian. That movement is building momentum. Part of that movement rejects the Bible as God's Word. Part of that movement wants to get out from under the authority of God and the authority of God's Word. **Psalm 2:2-3** describes what is going on in our country today. It says, "*The kings of the earth take their stand and the rulers take counsel together against the LORD and against His Anointed, saying, 'Let us tear their fetters apart and cast away their cords from us!'*" The American Humanist Association, in its 1973 Manifesto declared, "*No deity will save us, we will save ourselves.*" There are four basic tenants to humanism in our culture today, which states:

- There is no God.
- Since there is no God, then man of necessity evolved.
- Since man evolved (and is evolving), then there can be no absolutes.
- And since there are no absolutes, then there are no standards of morality.

By the way, there are always absolutes.

Part of this anti-Christian movement is to throw out the definition of marriage between a man and a woman and destroy the institution that God created and ordained, not man. Part of that movement is to legalize immorality and thereby promote it as acceptable behavior. Part of that movement is to convince the world and the church that homosexuality is a normal acceptable lifestyle. It is not! It is a sin that must be confessed and repented of, like every other sin. Read **Romans 1:24-32** and **1 Corinthians 6:9-10**, or look at what God did to Sodom and Gomorrah in the Old Testament.

Satan entices people with the temporal pleasures of sin so that he can keep them from the eternal pleasures that come from the true worship of God. Paul said, "*beware of the evil workers.*" In other words, beware of those who work and promote evil – that which is contrary to God's standards as defined in God's Word. To enter into the true worship of God our hearts must be pure and our sins confessed. Evil workers don't worship God they worship themselves.

Paul also warned us against those who would try to place us back under a religious ritualistic process that leads to salvation. In **verse 2** he said, "*beware of the false circumcision.*" We are to beware of those who either deny that Jesus is the only way to the Father (**John 14:6**) or those

who say it is Jesus plus something else. Beware of those who put people under a system of works to obtain salvation. These are the people, the schemes and the devises that Satan uses to keep people out of a personal relationship with God and thereby prevent the true worship of God.

A few years ago two other men and myself decided to go to a Bible study for men. The study was promoted by a very solid Christian organization, but we knew nothing about the man who was teaching the study. The first night that we attended the Bible study we were confronted with a doctrinal challenge. The man who was teaching the study stated very adamantly that to be saved you must be baptized with water. Now there is nothing wrong with being baptized. However, the Bible does not teach that it is necessary for salvation. It is a wonderful and beautiful way to express our faith in Christ, but it is not required for salvation (**Romans 10:9-13**, **Ephesians 2:8-9**).

One of the men with me was a brand new Christian who converted from the religion that he grew up in while living in Salt Lake City, Utah. The other man had been a Christian for probably 20 years. For some reason as we drove home they turned to me and asked, “*Do you think this guy was correct? Are we saved by grace through faith in Jesus Christ alone (Ephesians 2:8-9) or is our salvation incomplete until we have been baptized with water?*” They wanted proof from the Bible. They wanted proof that it was Jesus plus nothing. With the Lord’s help I was able to give them that proof. Their next question was, “*Are you going back next week?*” My answer was “*Absolutely not!*” I refuse to put myself under those who teach or indorse doctrinal errors.

Paul said, “***beware of the false circumcision.***” Beware of those who put people under a religious ritualistic system and thereby draw them away from the true worship of God. To worship God we must do so from a pure heart that has been transformed by the Holy Spirit as a result of us placing our faith in Jesus Christ as our personal Savior and Lord. We are to worship in the Spirit of God.

WORSHIP IN THE SPIRIT

Paul said in **verse 3** that we “***worship in the Spirit of God.***” Notice what Jesus said in **John 4:23-24**. “***But an hour is coming, and now is, when the true worshipers will worship the Father in spirit and truth; for such people the Father seeks to be His worshipers. God is spirit, and those who worship Him must worship in spirit and truth.***”

As believers we are to have a heart that overflows with worship generated by the Spirit of God. It involves adoration and praise and service to God and it transcends all outward rituals or ceremonies. True worship takes place in the heart not in the location. True worship takes place every day not just on Sunday morning. True worship goes beyond praising God, singing hymns and spiritual songs or participating in a worship service. The essence of worship is daily, living a life of obedient service to the Lord (**Romans 12:1**) out of our love and adoration of Him. It is a lifestyle not an event. True worship involves every aspect of life. True worship takes place when we:

- Love Him and delight in Him and get excited about our relationship with Him.
- Rejoice in the Lord.
- Reverence His name.
- Place our confidence in Him.

- Glorify Him.
- Are led by the Holy Spirit to express our love, and praise for Him.
- Are completely devoted to Him and there is no other rival in our hearts.
- Give Him all of our affection.
- Serve Him.

True Christians are not simply marked by attending church or performing religious duties, but by a worshiping heart every day. Our Sunday worship experience is to be an extension of our daily worship. It is when we all gather together with hearts of worship and lift our hearts and our voices to Him in praise and adoration together and serve Him together and get fed the Word of God together.

GLORY IN CHRIST

Paul said in verse 3, ***“we worship in the Spirit of God and we glory in Christ Jesus.”*** In other words, we boast with exalting joy in Jesus and about Jesus. We joyously give credit to Jesus for all that we are and all that we have. ***“Worthy is the Lamb that was slain to receive power and riches and wisdom and might and honor and glory and blessing” (Revelation 5:12).***

Satan seeks to sow discord among the brethren, to sow tares among the wheat, to sow false doctrine with the truth, to sow evil thoughts in the pure, to do all he can to hinder our work for God, our faith in God and our worship of God. Don't let him win! Your time with Jesus in prayer and in His Word and your worship of God is worth fighting for. Don't let it be diluted. Rejoice in the Lord!

There was a time in my life when I was so busy that I had to get up at 4:00 AM so I could spend time with my Lord in prayer and in His Word. I found myself starting my day in worship rather than starting my day stressing out with all I had to accomplish before the day was over. I put Jesus back at the top of my priority list and relied on Him to carry me through the day. I stopped putting confidence in my abilities and put my confidence in the One who gave me the abilities to begin with. My heart was full of joy before the sun came up in the morning because the Son was already in my heart and on my mind.

PUT NO CONFIDENCE IN THE FLESH

Paul gave one final thought: ***“put no confidence in the flesh.”*** False worshipers boast in themselves according to their accomplishments. True worshipers put no confidence in the flesh. It is the Spirit who gives life and power and direction and purpose and gifts. Therefore walk by the Spirit and worship by the Spirit of God. Rejoice in the Lord!

CHAPTER TWENTY

PHILIPPIANS 3:4-7

THE PROFIT AND LOSS COLUMN

Philippians 3:4-7

“...although I myself might have confidence in the flesh. If anyone else has a mind to put confidence in the flesh, I far more: circumcised the eighth day, of the nation of Israel, of the tribe of Benjamin, a Hebrew of Hebrews; as to the Law, a Pharisee; as to zeal, a persecutor of the church; as to the righteousness which is in the Law, found blameless. But whatever things were gain to me, those things I have counted as loss for the sake of Christ.”

In verses 4-7, Paul gave his own testimony. The last part of verse 3 he said to the church, *“put no confidence in the flesh.”* However, in verse 4 he said, *“although I myself might have confidence even in the flesh.”* It seems as though Paul was saying don’t do as I do but do as I say. It seems as though he was telling the church not to put confidence in the flesh, but it was okay if he did. However, Paul was not boasting in the flesh. He was not boasting about his credentials, accomplishments or reputation, but rather he was showing that they were all worthless when compared to knowing Christ as His Savior and Lord.

The Judaizers who were threatening the church at Philippi could not dispute Paul’s credentials, accomplishments and reputation. Paul knew that. Paul could have put confidence in his accomplishments and if he did, the accomplishments of the greatest religious people of his time would have been dwarfed in comparison.

Paul was not going to boast about himself, though he could, but rather he was going to boast in Christ Jesus. He was going to exemplify what he had just told the Philippians. He told them that true worshippers of God *“glory in Christ Jesus and put no confidence in the flesh.”* Therefore, Paul was going to show them by his example that:

- Being an extraordinarily religious person did not get him into the kingdom of God and it did not mean that he was worshiping the living God.
- His salvation was not based on knowing about Christ, but rather knowing Christ.
- Works were not going to get him into heaven, but rather it was by the grace of God through faith in Jesus Christ.

To communicate this truth Paul made a comparison between his past life in Judaism and his new life in Christ. In **verse 7**, Paul used business and accounting terminology. The Greek word for “**gain**” (“**kerdos**”) was commonly used to describe what was in the profit column. The Greek word for “**loss**” (“**zēmia**”) was used to describe what was in the loss column. When Paul added up his spiritual profits and losses, he discovered that only Jesus was in the profit column. What Paul once thought was in his profit column was actually in his loss column.

There are so many people today that need to hear what Paul said. So many people today are relying on their religious beliefs rather than on the person of Christ. Let’s begin by looking at what was in Paul’s loss column.

THE LOSS COLUMN

Paul began, in **verse 5**, by saying that he was “**circumcised the eighth day.**” By making that statement Paul is letting us know that he had godly and devout parents. He was raised according to the Mosaic Law, the Law as it was given to Moses by God and documented by Moses in the Pentateuch – the first five books of the Bible. Paul’s parents identified themselves and Paul with the teachings of Moses and with God’s covenant with Abraham.

However, Paul was showing us that being raised in a godly family that teaches the right things to do according to the Scriptures does not get you into heaven. It only gives “**you the wisdom that leads to salvation through faith which is in Christ Jesus**” (**2 Timothy 3:15**). Going to the synagogue or church does not get you into heaven and it does not mean that you are worshipping God. Participating in religious ceremonies and rituals like circumcision and infant or adult baptism does not get you into heaven. Paul had a great family heritage. However, it didn’t count. It was in his loss column. He still needed Jesus. He could believe in God’s covenant with Abraham and God’s Word and in what his parents taught him, but until he personally believed in Jesus Christ as his Messiah and as his Savior and Lord he was lost.

Paul went on to say in **verse 5** that he was “**of the nation of Israel.**” He was a birthright Jew. He was a member of God’s chosen people from birth. He was a descendant of Abraham, Isaac and Jacob. He was born into the right family and into the right nation, but that did not get him into the kingdom of God. It was in his loss column. He still needed Jesus.

For many years I called myself a Christian because I was born in America. I thought everyone born in America was a Christian. Boy did I have a rude awakening. Just like Paul. Our national heritage does not count. We still need Jesus.

Every one who gets into heaven and every one who is a true worshiper of God must be born again. As Jesus told Nicodemus in **John 3:5-7**, “**Truly, truly, I say to you, unless one is born of water** (referring to physical birth) **and of the Spirit** (referring to spiritual birth) **he cannot enter into the kingdom of God. That which is born of the flesh is flesh, and that which is born of the Spirit is spirit. Do not be amazed that I said to you, ‘You must be born again.’**” We were all born into our earthly families and we must all be born again into God’s heavenly family. God’s Spirit accomplishes that as we receive Jesus Christ as our personal Savior and Lord. We are at that moment born again.

Paul also said in **verse 5** that he was *“of the tribe of Benjamin.”* He had a pure genealogical record that could be traced all the way back to the tribe of Benjamin. This was a very prestigious heritage several reasons:

- Benjamin was the only son of Jacob’s to be born in the Promised Land.
- The holy city of Jerusalem was located in Benjamin’s territory (**Judges 1:21**).
- The tribe of Benjamin along with the tribe of Judah were the only tribes that remained faithful to king David when the kingdom was split.
- The first king of Israel, Saul, was from the tribe of Benjamin. Paul’s former name before he became a Christian was Saul. He was probably named after king Saul. Unfortunately, just like king Saul who persecuted David who was to eventually sit upon the throne in Jerusalem, so did Saul (later known as Paul) persecute *“the Son of David”* – Jesus Christ, the Messiah (**Matthew 1:1**), who would eventually sit upon the throne in Jerusalem.

Paul was born into the right family and into the right nation and belonged to one of the most important tribes, but that didn’t count. He still needed Jesus.

Paul also said in **verse 5** that he was *“a Hebrew of Hebrews.”* Paul was thoroughly grounded in Judaism. He studied under the renowned rabbi Gamaliel (**Acts 5:34** and **Acts 22:3**). Paul belonged to the highest echelon of religious circles. He was well on his way to the top of his religious ladder. In **Galatians 1:14** Paul said, *“...I was advancing in Judaism beyond many of my contemporaries among my countryman, being more zealous for my ancestral traditions.”* Paul was well educated and educated by the very best, but that didn’t count. He still needed Jesus.

Paul said in **verse 5** that *“as to the Law, a Pharisee.”* There were two primary Jewish sects when Paul wrote this letter, the Pharisees and the Sadducees. The Pharisees were the most influential of the two at the time of Christ. They were the most strict within the Jewish religion (**Acts 26:5**). They believed in the Scriptures, but misinterpreted them and added to them their own interpretations and traditions, which they considered to be equal to the Word of God. They believed in the resurrection of the dead, in angels and in miracles. They kept the Sabbath, fasted, tithed and were known for their long prayers. They were devout legalist. Paul was extremely religious, but that didn’t count. He still needed Jesus.

Paul’s religious stature serves as an illustration that no priest, pastor, monk, Muslim cleric, Jewish rabbi, theological scholar or any member of any devout religious sect or organization no matter how zealous they are can achieve salvation by such involvement. Jesus said in **John 14:6**, *“I am the way, and the truth, and the life; no one comes to the Father but through me.”* In **Acts 4:12** we are told referring to Jesus, *“And there is salvation in no one else; for there is no other name under heaven that has been given among men by which we must be saved.”* No one will ever stand before God and enter heaven by boasting in their credentials, accomplishments or reputation. They will only enter heaven by receiving Jesus Christ as their personal Savior and Lord. It is not religion that gets us into heaven but rather a relationship with Jesus Christ, which reconciles us with the Father. Paul had to learn that. He needed Jesus and Jesus alone.

He said in **verse 6**, *“as to zeal, a persecutor of the church.”* He was furiously enraged against Christians. He was fanatically against Christ. In **Acts 8:3** we are told, *“But Saul (named Paul after his conversion) began ravaging the church, entering house after house, and dragging off men and women, he would put them in prison.”* In **Acts 26:9-11** Paul said, *“So then, I thought to myself that I had to do many things hostile to the name of Jesus of Nazareth. And*

this is just what I did in Jerusalem; not only did I lock up many of the saints in prison, having received authority from the chief priests, but also when they were being put to death I cast my vote against them. And as I punished them often in all the synagogues, I tried to force them to blaspheme; and being furiously enraged at them, I kept pursuing them even to foreign cities.”

Paul’s zeal did not earn him favor with God. Even today there are some religious groups who think that persecuting and even killing Christians earns them favor with their god. However, that is not the case. Killing anyone only earns favor with Satan the one who comes to kill and destroy. As Jesus said in **John 10:10**, *“The thief comes only to steal and kill and destroy; I came that they may have life, and have it abundantly.”* So many religious zealots today have the same problem that Paul had. Paul knew about Jesus but he did not know Jesus.

Paul also said in **verse 6**, *“as to the righteousness which is in the Law, found blameless.”* Paul was not claiming to be sinless but blameless under the Law. He kept the Mosaic Law; offered all the right sacrifices, plus he kept all the traditions established by the Pharisees. Paul tried to do his best, but his best was not enough. He boasted in his own righteousness, but failed to understand what the prophet Isaiah said in **Isaiah 64:6**. He said, *“For all of us have become like one who is unclean, and all our righteous deeds are like a filthy garment; and all of us wither like a leaf, and our iniquities, like the wind, take us away.”* Paul, like so many today, gloried in his own religion instead of glorying in Christ Jesus.

He boasted in his own credentials, accomplishments and reputation rather than boasting in the fact that He knew Jesus Christ. However, that all changed. Paul had an encounter with Jesus on the road to Damascus, read **Acts 26:11-18**.

THE GAIN COLUMN

Paul seemed to have it all. He had undergone the proper rituals. He was a member of God’s chosen people. He was from a favored tribe of Israel. He perfectly maintained his orthodox heritage. He was zealous for his religion. He rigidly conformed to all the outward requirements of Judaism. With all of those accomplishments, Paul said in **Philippians 3:7**, *“But whatever things were gain to me, those things I have counted as loss for the sake of Christ.”*

Everything that Paul thought was in his profit column was actually in his loss column when they were held under the light of Christ. When Paul had an encounter with Jesus on the road to Damascus he realized that his credentials, accomplishments and reputation did not open the door into God’s eternal kingdom. They shut it. They were all part of the broad path that leads to destruction and eternal condemnation (**Matthew 7:13-14**). Paul came to the realization that there was only one thing in his profit column and that was Jesus Christ. Therefore, he was willing to throw away all that he was taught and all that he was, for the sake of Christ. Paul left his religion and entered into a personal relationship with Jesus Christ and the Father.

What’s in your spiritual profit and loss column? Can you truly say it is Jesus and Jesus alone? Or, are you relying on your religious beliefs, credentials, accomplishments and reputation to get you into heaven? Some teach that heaven is like a wheel and the rim of the wheel represents heaven and the hub of the wheel represents mankind and the many spokes leading from the hub to the rim represent the multiple ways you can get the heaven. That is not what Paul or any of the apostles taught. As Jesus said, *“I am the way, and the truth, and the life; no one comes to the*

Father but through me” (John 14:6). Jesus is not one of the ways, He is the only way. Don't put confidence in the flesh, nor in the wisdom of man, or in man's religious system. Count them as loss for the sake of Christ. Better yet, count them as rubbish so that you might gain Christ ***(Philippians 3:8).***

CHAPTER TWENTY-ONE

PHILIPPIANS 3:8-11**THE SURPASSING VALUE****Philippians 3:8-11**

“More than that, I count all things to be loss in view of the surpassing value of knowing Christ Jesus my Lord, for whom I have suffered the loss of all things, and count them but rubbish so that I may gain Christ, and may be found in Him, not having a righteousness of my own derived from the Law, but that which is through faith in Christ, the righteousness which comes from God on the basis of faith, that I may know Him and the power of His resurrection and the fellowship of His sufferings, being conformed to His death; in order that I may attain to the resurrection from the dead.”

In **Philippians 3:4-11** Paul gave part of his testimony describing the difference between his past life in Judaism and his new life in Christ. As we saw in **verses 3-7**, he used business and accounting terms describing his spiritual profit and loss column. What Paul thought was in his spiritual profit column as a Jew, the things that would earn him his way into heaven and favor with God, such as his religious accomplishments and zeal, his Jewish heritage, his credential and reputation were actually in his loss column. In the light of knowing Jesus Christ Paul discovered that the only thing that could be in his profit column was Jesus Himself.

Now, in **Philippians 3:8-11**, Paul described the surpassing value of knowing Jesus Christ. He described the things that were added to his spiritual profit column as a result of knowing Jesus Christ as his personal Savior and Lord. The things that were added to Paul’s spiritual profit column are the same things that are added to our spiritual profit column when we put our faith in Jesus Christ. They include His righteousness, experiencing the power of His resurrection, experiencing the fellowship of His suffering and experiencing the **“out-resurrection”** from the dead.

Paul began by saying, ***“More than that, I count all things to be loss in view of the surpassing value of knowing Christ Jesus my Lord, for whom I have suffered the loss of all things, and count them but rubbish so that I may gain Christ.”*** What Paul is saying is that along with losing his religious stature, his community respect, his reputation and his future in Judaism he also lost everything else to gain Christ.

He probably lost his home in Tarsus, his parents and his livelihood. When a Jewish person embraced Christianity their community and family treated them as though they were dead. Paul was probably excommunicated from his family. That was what happened to many of the Jews in Jerusalem who converted to Christianity by accepting Jesus Christ as their Messiah, Savior and Lord.

Some cultures still do that today. A few years ago I became a very good friend with a Chinese man who was a wonderful brother in the Lord. He and his wife were absolutely on fire for Jesus. One day he shared with me how he by faith received Jesus Christ as his personal Savior and Lord. As an adult, he travel to China to see his parents. He said his parents were full of joy when they saw him and they immediately embraced. Then, they asked him to join them in worshipping their ancestors. My friend explained to his parents how he became a believer in Jesus Christ and that he would only worship the living God not his dead ancestors. His parents demanded that he join them in the worship of their ancestors but he refused. At that moment he was treated as though he was dead. They stopped talking to him and stopped looking at him. They did not even acknowledge that he was in the same room. They prepared a meal, but they did not offer him any food or even a chair to sit on. My friend told me that on that day he had to make one of the most important decisions of his life. He was either going to choose Jesus and give up his family and his heritage, or he was going to choose his family, embrace their religion, and give up Jesus. He chose Jesus and lost everything else.

Paul said he ***“suffered the loss of all things.”*** He lost all hope of a settled home life; he lost his health for hardship and his freedom for imprisonment. All that Paul had in life he counted it as ***“rubbish”*** so that he might ***“gain Christ.”*** Everything that Paul had accomplished and inherited and obtained outside of knowing Jesus Christ was nothing more than a pile of garbage that needed to be tossed out. There was nothing left in Paul’s life that was more important to him than Jesus Christ.

Have you gotten to that place in your life? Are you holding on to anything that you consider to be more important than Jesus? Is there anything that is preventing you from growing in your relationship with Him, or preventing you from following Jesus or receiving Him as your Savior and Lord? For some people it’s their home, kids, spouse, career, money, pride, etc. I am convinced that if we know Jesus as Paul knew Jesus the world would loose all its attraction. It would no longer have the power to attract us or distract us.

I have often said, *“It’s all about Jesus.”* Most Christians would agree, but do we really put that into practice, on a daily basis? Everything that this world can offer is like a heap of rubbish when compared to the surpassing value of knowing Christ Jesus.

KNOWING CHRIST JESUS

When Paul talked about ***“the surpassing value of knowing Christ Jesus”*** in **verse 8**, he is referring to something that means much more than the knowledge about Christ. Jesus said in His prayer to the Father in **John 17:3**, ***“This is eternal life, that they know You, the only true God, and Jesus Christ whom You have sent.”*** Part of the surpassing value of knowing Jesus and the Father is having eternal life. As a result of experiencing that eternal life, we will continue for eternity to grow in our understanding of Him. We will get to know and experience all of His

eternal attributes, all of His awesome power and all of His majestic being. When we put our faith in Jesus and His work of reconciliation upon the cross we then know Him as our Savior and Lord. However, throughout eternity we will get to know Him as our King, as our High Priest, as the Creator of all things, as the One who is full of grace and as the One full of glory setting upon His throne as God Almighty.

HIS RIGHTEOUSNESS

Something incredible happens when we truly know Jesus Christ as our personal Savior and Lord. He not only forgives us of our sins and gives us eternal life, but He also credits our account with spiritual blessings, such as His righteousness. That is part of the surpassing value of knowing Jesus. Paul said in **verse 9** that he wanted to *“be found in Him, not having a righteousness of my own derived from the Law, but that which is through faith in Christ, the righteousness which comes from God on the basis of faith.”* When we accept Jesus Christ as our Savior and Lord he takes upon Himself our sin and in exchange places upon us His righteousness. In **2 Corinthians 5:21** we are told, *“He made Him who knew no sin to be sin on our behalf, so that we might become the righteousness of God in Him.”* Every believer becomes the righteousness God.

Notice that in **2 Corinthians 5:21**, we are told that we *“become the righteousness of God in Him”* – in Christ. In **Philippians 3:9** Paul said he wanted to be *“found in Him”* having the *“righteousness that comes from God.”* Being found in Him, in Jesus, means that when God looks at you and me He sees Christ. He sees His own righteousness. It is His righteousness that enables us to stand in His presence without judgement. That is part of the surpassing value of knowing Christ Jesus.

HIS RESURRECTION POWER

Another part of the surpassing value of knowing Jesus is experiencing the power of His resurrection. Paul, in **verse 10**, expanded upon his desire to be found in Jesus having the righteousness of God, so that he *“may know Him and the power of His resurrection.”* He not only wanted to have God’s righteousness, but also to know His righteousness and to experience the power of His resurrection.

The same power that raised Jesus from the dead will raise us up from the dead to be with Him in glory unless the rapture of the church comes while we are still drawing breath. We will experience the same power that enabled Jesus to conquer death. It is part of the surpassing value of being found in Christ. Notice what we are told in **1 Corinthians 15:51-57**. Paul said, *“Behold, I tell you a mystery; we will not all sleep, but we will all be changed, in a moment, in the twinkling of an eye, at the last trumpet; for the trumpet will sound, and the dead will be raised imperishable, and we will be changed. For this perishable must put on the imperishable, and this mortal must put on immortality. But when this perishable will have put on the imperishable, and this mortal will have put on immortality, then will come about the saying that is written, ‘Death is swallowed up in victory. O death, where is your victory? O death, where is your sting?’ The sting of death is sin, and the power of sin is the law; but thanks be to God, who*

gives us victory through our Lord Jesus Christ.” A part of the surpassing value of knowing Christ is victory over death. It is the power that results from His resurrection.

HIS FELLOWSHIP OF SUFFERING

Another part of the surpassing value of knowing Jesus is revealed in **verse 10** when Paul said, *“that I may know Him and ... the fellowship of His suffering, being conformed to His death.”* To understand what Paul is saying we need to keep several things in mind. First, anyone who walks faithfully with Christ must be willing to suffer hardship and persecution as well as animosity, alienation and false accusations from friends and family just as Christ Himself suffered.

We must also be willing to experience and endure the emotional drain and physical exhaustion that comes when we minister to people and serve within the church. Paul was willing to experience all of these things in order to know Christ all the more. As Paul said in **2 Corinthians 12:10**, *“Therefore I am well content with weakness, with insults, with distress, with persecutions, with difficulties, for Christ’s sake; for when I am weak, then I am strong.”* Paul was willing to experience the suffering that Jesus went through in order to know the power of God’s indwelling Spirit to carry him through it.

In addition, we need to keep in mind the reason why Jesus came to suffer the cross in the first place and why He has left us behind as His witnesses. I believe that when we enter into the fellowship of His suffering, then we will have the same passion for the lost that Jesus had. In other words, we will agonize over them and their need for salvation through prayer. We will be willing to sacrifice the pleasures of life, our creature comfort, our time and sleep, so that they may come to know the salvation that is in Christ and the surpassing value of knowing Jesus and what it means to be found in Him.

THE “OUT-RESURRECTION”

There is one final thing that Paul mentioned that is part of the surpassing value of knowing Christ and that is the *“out-resurrection.”* Paul wanted to know Christ, receive His righteousness, experience His resurrection power and experience the fellowship of His suffering so that he would experience the *“out-resurrection.”* In **verse 11** Paul said, *“in order that I may attain to the resurrection from the dead.”*

Paul used a different Greek word for *“resurrection”* in **verse 11**. Normally it is the Greek word *“anastasis.”* Here in **verse 11**, he used the word *“exanastasis”* which literally means *“out resurrection.”* It refers to a resurrection out from the dead as distinguished from a resurrection of the dead.

According to Scripture everyone will be resurrected from the grave, both the believers and the nonbelievers. The nonbeliever will be resurrected from the grave, the sea and Hades for the purpose of judgement and eternal separation from God. They will be tossed into the lake of fire for all eternity (**Revelation 20:13-15**). The believers will be separated from the nonbelievers; we will experience the *“out-resurrection.”* We will be separated out from the nonbelievers to receive our glorious eternal rewards and our position of honor with Christ for eternity. We will be

separated out and into His presence where there is fullness of joy and pleasures forever (**Psalm 16:11**).

According to Scripture all believers will be resurrected to live with Christ before His return as King to reign for 1000 years (**1 Thessalonians 4:16-17**). That is the rapture of the church or the event that Paul called the “*out-resurrection*.” The separation of believers from nonbelievers. Nonbelievers will be raised after the 1000-year reign of Christ. Therefore, as a result of knowing Christ as Savior and Lord we will attain to the “*out-resurrection*” which is part of the surpassing value of know Jesus Christ along with His righteousness, His resurrection power and the fellowship of His suffering.

When Paul looked at his profit and loss column, the profit column had a surpassing value. Jesus Christ was all that was in his profit column, but what Jesus added to it as part of His abundant grace was a surpassing value to anything the world could offer.

Do you know Jesus? Have you received the forgiveness of your sins and eternal life? Can you honestly say that you are found in Him having His righteousness rather than your own? Do you know without a doubt that you will experience the “*out-resurrection*”? If you are not sure, then take a moment and ask Jesus Christ to come into your life, forgive your sin and be your Savior and Lord. Everything else in life is rubbish when compared to the surpassing value of knowing Jesus Christ and entering into a personal relationship with Him and the Father.

PHILIPPIANS 3:12-14

PRESSING ON TOWARDS THE GOAL PART 1

Philippians 3:12-14

“Not that I have already obtained it or have already become perfect, but I press on so that I may lay hold of that for which also I was laid hold of by Christ Jesus. Brethren, I do not regard myself as having laid hold of it yet; but one thing I do: forgetting what lies behind and reaching forward to what lies ahead, I press on toward the goal for the prize of the upward call of God in Christ Jesus.”

Before we consider **Philippians 3:12-14**, we need to review the preceding verses. It is important to keep this passage in the context in which it was written. In this section of Scripture, **Philippians 3:4-14**, Paul shared his testimony. He was being completely transparent. He was letting us see what he did wrong and what he did right by looking at his past, present and future. We get to see the heart of Paul. In doing so, we can learn from his mistakes and follow his example as a disciple of Christ.

In **Philippians 3:4-7**, Paul focused on his past. He identified those things that he thought earned him favor with God, but in reality they did not. Those things included the fact that he was an extremely religious person keeping the Law of Moses from childhood. He was a Jew from birth and raised by a devout Jewish family. He was a Hebrew of Hebrews being trained by one of the most prominent Rabbis of his time, Gamaliel. Paul had a great family heritage being born into one of the most important tribes in Israel, the tribe of Benjamin. He had an impressive reputation as a Pharisee. To top it off, his zeal for his religious beliefs was evidenced by his vicious persecution of the church. All of those things Paul said he *“counted as loss for the sake of Christ.”* Paul had the same problem that most people have. He knew about Christ, but he did not know Christ. He had religion, but he did not have a relationship with the only true God. However, that would change.

With that thought in mind, in **Philippians 3:8-11**, Paul focused on his present position in Christ. He focused on *“the surpassing value of knowing Christ Jesus.”* That surpassing value included receiving God’s righteousness, which came as a result of putting his faith in Jesus Christ as his personal Savior and Lord. The surpassing value of knowing Jesus also included experiencing the fellowship of His suffering, which included hardships and persecution as well as animosity, alienation and false accusations from friends, family and even some Christians. The surpassing value of knowing Jesus Christ also included the promise of experiencing the power of His resurrection and eventually the *“out-resurrection.”* Paul along with all believers are separated out from nonbelievers to receive their glorious eternal rewards and a position of honor with Christ for eternity. We will either be caught up in the air with Christ, raptured while alive, or our buried bodies will be raised from the grave to join our spirit with Christ while leaving behind the unbelievers in the grave. *“Behold, I tell you a mystery; we will not all sleep, but we will all be changed, in a moment, in the twinkling of an eye...the dead will be raised imperishable (that is the “out-resurrection”), and we will all be changed” (1 Corinthians 15:51-52)* and given our glorified bodies.

With that thought in mind, Paul then focused on the future, in **Philippians 3:12-14**. He focused on the ultimate goal, the ultimate prize that comes as a result of knowing Jesus Christ. Paul went from knowing about Jesus (in **verses 4-7**) that resulted in losing everything, to knowing Jesus in a personal way (in **verses 8-11**) that resulted in gaining everything, to pressing on towards the goal that Jesus had for his life (in **verses 12-14**) that results in the ultimate prize. The goal that Jesus had for Paul is the same goal that He has for every person that has trusted Him as their personal Savior and Lord.

Okay, what is the goal? What is the prize of the upward call of God in Christ Jesus that Paul referred to in **verse 14**? The apostle Paul as well as the apostle John and the apostle Peter revealed the ultimate goal that God has for us in Christ. Paul said in **Philippians 3:20-21**. He said, *“For our citizenship is in heaven, from which also we eagerly wait for a Savior, the Lord Jesus Christ; who will transform the body of our humble state into conformity with the body of His glory, by the exertion of the power that He has even to subject all things to Himself.”* In **Romans 8:29** Paul also said that we will *“become conformed to the image of His Son.”* In **1 John 3:2** the apostle John said, *“that when He appears, we will be like Him.”* In **2 Peter 1:3-4** the apostle Peter said that because we know Jesus Christ as Savior and Lord, God *“has granted to us His precious and magnificent promises, so that by them you may become partakers of the divine nature, having escaped the corruption that is in the world by lust.”* In **2 Timothy 4:8** Paul said, *“...in the future there is laid up for me the crown of righteousness, which the Lord, the righteous judge, will award to me on that day; and not only to me, but to all who have loved His appearing.”* In short, *“the goal for the prize of the upward call of God in Christ Jesus”* is Christlikeness. We will be given a glorious immortal body like His. We will be given His divine nature. He will give us the crown of righteousness. We will think and act in holiness, purity and righteousness just like Jesus.

Understanding the ultimate goal and the prize, then what should we be doing now and why? In **Philippians 3:12-14**, Paul tells us what we should be doing as disciples of Christ and how to do it. In the process he reveals five steps that we can take to accomplish any goal in life.

Before we look at those five steps, let's be reminded of a few more things that are part of the surpassing value of knowing Jesus Christ as Savior and Lord. When we put our faith in Him as Savior and Lord the Holy Spirit dwells within us and our focus in life changes. We are given a new purpose, priorities and direction in life. Our thought pattern changes. We become sensitive to the leading of God in our lives by the Holy Spirit. We are given the ability to understand and apply the Word of God. We are given spiritual discernment. The Holy Spirit gives us spiritual gifts by which we can faithfully serve God experiencing His power at work in us. We are being drawn closer and closer, with the passing of each day, to seeing God Almighty face to face and obtaining the goal of Christlikeness. Some will reach that goal sooner than others, but all who know Jesus will reach the goal.

However, as long as we draw breath, there are five things that need to happen for us to stay focused on the goal and to stay on track.

FIGURING OUT THE NEED

The first thing that needs to happen is this: We need to figure out the need. Before we can set a goal, we need to recognize that we have a need. In **verse 12** Paul said, ***“Not that I have already obtained it or have already become perfect, but I press on so that I may lay hold of that for which also I was laid hold of by Christ Jesus.”*** Paul recognized his need. He was still in training just like everyone else who has received Christ as their personal Savior and Lord. He was not ***“perfect”*** or ***“mature”*** in his walk of faith with Jesus even though he was an apostle. He was still growing spiritually. He recognized that Jesus had a goal for him and that he should be moving towards that goal.

I have found myself, far too often, walking on some very dangerous ground. What I have discovered is that many Christians are walking there too. I have a tendency to rest on my laurels. Far too often I find myself being content with my current spiritual condition and achievements in life. I become satisfied with who I am spiritually and as a result I stop maturing in Christ or at the very least, I slow down in the process.

A few years ago I was teaching a Bible study on a subject that I had taught before. I used the same illustrations that I had used before. After the study my wife asked me a question that only she could ask or even knew to ask. She said, *“I noticed that you are using the same personal illustrations that you used ten years ago. Has Jesus stopped working in your life? If you are walking with Him and growing in Him, then you should have more recent examples to share as to how He is working in your life.”* The Holy Spirit used her to nail me between the eyes. She had the spiritual gift of discernment. And, she was absolutely correct.

It is very dangerous when we think we have obtained enough of a grasp on the Word of God that we stop reading it. That is when we stop maturing in Christ. When we stop looking for personal applications from God's Word and stop asking God to change us, mold us, and transform us into Christlikeness, that is when the process stops and we rest on our laurels. It is very dangerous when we have the misconception that we have arrived to an acceptable spiritual level in life. This was certainly not Paul's attitude. Like Paul, we must recognize our need before we can press on towards the goal.

Paul understood that he had not yet grasped all that he could grasp concerning the surpassing value of knowing Jesus. Paul had Christ's righteousness, but he was still learning more about that righteousness and how it was changing, cleansing and perfecting his life in Christ. Paul had Christ's power working in him through the Holy Spirit, but he was still learning about his own weaknesses and how to appropriate the power of God's Holy Spirit in his life and in his daily struggles. Paul experienced the fellowship of Christ's suffering, but was still in the process of learning patience and in the process of being perfected and strengthened spiritually through those sufferings. Paul glorified Christ in his body, but he still waited for his glorified body. Paul had to recognize his imperfections before he could pursue perfection in Christ and so must we. Paul had to recognize that he was a sinner before he could recognize the One who forgives sin and so must we. Paul had to recognize his need before he could put energy into pursuing the goal that Jesus had for him and so must we.

I had a boss once that always recognized my needs. As a result, he was always setting new goals for me to achieve. Our company had implemented a new process for performance evaluations. We were to write our own performance evaluations and then review them with our supervisor. In the process of writing my own evaluations I made myself look as though I was his most valued employee. I presented myself as the greatest thing since sliced bread. I told him all the great and magnificent things that I accomplished for the company. I showed him how I was making him look good by all of my achievements. I thought for sure he would give me a pay increase and even a promotion after reading my self-evaluation.

He called me into his office to go over what I had written. He asked me to verbally walk him through it. I thought to myself, what an opportunity. So, I took that opportunity to embellish upon what I had already written. He was very patient with me and listened intently to everything that I said. When I finished he said, *"that's wonderful, but what have you done for me today."* What he was saying was, your resting on your laurels. What he was looking for and what he wanted to hear was what I was doing for him that very day. What were my goals for that day?

Sometimes we do the same with Jesus. We think of all the wonderful things we have done for Him yesterday and that is great. They all have eternal spiritual value, but what are we doing for Him today? How are we pleasing Him today? Do we recognize our need today, to grow in our relationship with Him? Do we look at today from God's perspective and recognize that today is the only day we have on this earth to glorify Him, honor Him, serve Him, learn more about Him and please Him? Do we understand that today is the only day that we have to press on toward the goal for the prize of the upward call of God in Christ Jesus? If Paul came to that conclusion as an apostle, then how much more is our need to recognize the need to press on towards the same goal that Jesus has set for each of us.

Before we can pursue the goal we must recognize the need. Perhaps you need to do what I did. I got down on my knees and asked the Lord to forgive my pride and complacency and to help me get back on track. Sometimes we need to be like David in **Psalm 51:10** and say, ***"Create in me a clean heart O God, and renew a steadfast spirit within me."*** Once we have recognized our need, then we are ready to take the next four steps in pursuing the goal.

PHILIPPIANS 3:12-14

PRESSING ON TOWARDS THE GOAL PART 2

Philippians 3:12-14

“Not that I have already obtained it or have already become perfect, but I press on so that I may lay hold of that for which also I was laid hold of by Christ Jesus. Brethren, I do not regard myself as having laid hold of it yet; but one thing I do: forgetting what lies behind and reaching forward to what lies ahead, I press on toward the goal for the prize of the upward call of God in Christ Jesus.”

In **Philippians 3:12-14** Paul draws our attention to the future ultimate goal of being found in Christ and that goal is Christlikeness. In this section of Scripture Paul identified five key steps that keep us focused, so we press on towards that goal. They are five steps that we can take to reach any goal in life, but most importantly *“the goal for the prize of the upward call of God in Christ Jesus.”*

So far we have only looked at the first step which is revealed in **verse 12**. Paul said, *“Not that I have already obtained it or have already become perfect, but I press on so that I may lay hold of that for which also I was laid hold of by Christ Jesus.”* Before we can put our energy into pursuing a goal we must be convinced in our heart of hearts that the goal is worth pursuing. We must be convinced that we personally need to accomplish the goal. Paul recognized his need to pursue Christlikeness.

Paul understood that he hadn't obtained the goal of Christlikeness. He knew that he was not perfect or fully mature in his walk of faith with Jesus. He had the need to press on towards the goal that Jesus had for him. By the way, it is the same goal that Jesus has for each of us. Paul, like all of us, who have trusted Christ as our personal Savior and Lord, received forgiveness of sin in exchange for Christ's righteousness. But, Paul, like all of us, was still growing in that righteousness and learning how to live by that righteousness. Paul recognized his need to pursue Christlikeness.

Paul also understood that the goal was obviously worth pursuing. It was part of the surpassing value of knowing Jesus Christ as Savior and Lord. To be conformed to His image (**Romans 8:29**), to have our bodies transformed into conformity with the body of His glory (**Philippians 3:20-21**), to partake of His divine nature (**2 Peter 1:3-4**), to receive the crown of righteousness (**2 Timothy 4:8**), to become Christlike was definitely worth pursuing.

Before we press on towards the goal, we must be convinced that we have a need to pursue the goal and that the goal is worth pursuing. May I say: There is no greater goal that has been given to the Bride of Christ than to reflect His righteousness and divine nature; to live and reign with Him, with bodies conformed to His glory for all eternity is the highest of all possible goals. Once we have come to that conclusion, then we are ready to take the next step in pressing on *“toward the goal for the prize of the upward call of God in Christ Jesus.”*

FIRST THING FIRST

Paul said in **verse 13**, *“Brethren, I do not regard myself as having laid hold of it yet; but one thing I do”* – stop there. Paul said, *“but one thing I do.”* That is the second step in accomplishing the goal.

The idea seems so simple, yet it is sometimes hard to do in our multitasking society. The one thing that prohibits us from accomplishing any goal and accomplishing it well, is continual distractions. We tend to wear too many hats. We have so many things to accomplish that we don't always get to the most important goal; or if we do, it is often done poorly.

A management consultant shared a story with me about how he was hired by one of our nations largest corporations. They hired him to evaluate their work process so they would become more productive in what they did. He spent several weeks analyzing the companies work process and procedures. He conducted time management studies and everything else he could think of. At the conclusion of his evaluation he reported back to the Board of Directors and the CEO. He told them that their corporation was one of the most efficient and well-organized companies that he had ever seen. He said, *“I only have one suggestion. It is so simple that I hesitate to even mention it.”* He said, *“Have everyone in your corporation make a list of the ten most important things that they need to accomplish every morning. Then, have them prioritize those ten things and accomplish the most important item on their list before they move on to the second.”* Basically, his advice was *“but one thing I do”* -- do the first thing first.

He asked them to put the idea into practice for three months, then pay him whatever it was worth. If it did not help their corporation they didn't owe him anything. At the end of three months he received a check for \$100,000.00. Their productivity went through the roof.

To accomplish a goal we take one step at a time. Paul said, *“but one thing I do.”* Dwight L. Moody who was a successful businessman turned evangelist, pastor, preacher, and founder of Moody Bible Institute in Chicago once said, *“It is better to say ‘this one thing I do,’ than to say, ‘these forty things I dabble with.’”* There is a lot of wisdom in that statement. To accomplish a goal we must do the first thing first. We must concentrate on one thing at a time without losing sight of the ultimate objective or goal. We can very easily get ourselves so diluted with activities, which all may be very good and valid, but in so doing we lose our focus, we get distracted from the ultimate goal.

Before the great Chicago fire in 1871, Moody was involved in many good things such as speaking at Sunday School conventions, he was president of the YMCA, involved in many evangelistic meetings, an active worker within the church and the list goes on. After the fire where hundreds of people died without knowing Christ Moody became focused on one thing -- evangelism, which was his spiritual gift. As a result, millions heard the gospel and Moody became one of the worlds leading evangelist of his time. He began to reflect Christ to the world around him by doing what God had gifted him to do. As a result, he pressed on towards *“the goal for the prize of the upward call of God in Christ Jesus.”* Moody went from dabbling in forty things to focusing on one.

To press on towards the goal of Christlikeness we need to put into practice the spiritual gift that God has given to each of us, so we might serve and glorify Him. Serving Him through our spiritual gift is an intrinsic part of how we grow up in Christ and become more Christlike. Therefore, with all the other things we have to do, lets make sure we focus on the one thing God has gifted us to do, today. *“But one thing I do”* Paul said.

When I worked in the corporate world I was asked to oversee the relocation of all of our company offices, which were scattered all over Southern California, into one new facility. The move included about 8,000 people over a period of several weeks. My job was to make sure that when people moved from their old location to their new location they experienced minimal disruption to their workday. I had to make sure their new office furniture was arranged properly, the phones worked, the movers delivered the right boxes to the right place, etc, etc. It was a fairly insignificant task in the big scheme of things.

It was late at night when I finished checking out several manager’s offices that were to be relocated over the weekend. The offices were beautifully decorated. They were about eighteen feet long and fourteen feet wide. Probably bigger than many of our living rooms. One of the eighteen-foot walls was solid glass floor to ceiling with a sheer curtain. The office had a six-foot long desk and credenza made of from solid oak. There was a round conference table in one corner of the office; it too was made from solid oak. There were seven over stuffed leather chairs that were extremely comfortable. And, some rather expensive artwork hanging on the walls for decoration, as well as live plants in beautiful ceramic containers.

I sat down in one of the over stuffed leather chairs and put my feet on top of the desk. One of my coworkers walked by and asked, *“What in the world are you doing?”* I told him I was sitting in my future office. He laughed and walked on.

I decided to put together a plan that outlined various steps that I would need to take for me to accomplish my goal of becoming one of the managers in that fortune 500 company. As I made that plan I also made a commitment not to neglect using my spiritual gift and to care for the needs of my family. My secular career was not my primary goal.

Now I understood the Biblical principle in **Proverbs 16:3** that said, *“Commit your works to the LORD and your plans will be established.”* I understood the Biblical principle in **Proverbs 16:9** that said, *“The mind of man plans his way, but the LORD directs his steps.”* I understood the Biblical principle in **Proverbs 3:5-6** that said, *“Trust in the LORD with all your heart and do not lean on your own understanding. In all your ways acknowledge Him, and He will make your paths straight.”* I understood what Paul meant when he said in **Colossians 3:23-24**, *“Whatever you do, do your work heartily, as for the Lord rather than for men, knowing that*

from the Lord you will receive the reward of the inheritance. It is the Lord Christ whom you serve." By God's grace and to the best of my abilities, I put into practice those principles as well as others, and committed my plans and myself to the Lord in prayer. Then, I set out to accomplish the first thing first in that plan – ***"but one thing I do."*** In my case, the first step I needed to achieve, in order to reach my goal, was to build my boss's confidence in my abilities, work ethic, and desire to help him achieve his goals. God was pleased with that approach and helped me fulfill that goal.

My faith in the Lord and my desire to glorify Him grew over that time as I saw Him work in my life. He took me on an amazing journey. My goal was accomplished. I became one of the managers within the company and had one of those beautiful offices with solid oak furniture.

During that journey, I was active in serving the Lord within my church. I was an elder in the church, Sunday School teacher, Home Bible Study leader, and served on various committees. I was active in using my spiritual gift. I was learning a little about what it meant to press on towards ***"the goal for the prize of the upward call of God in Christ Jesus"*** while working in my secular job and serving within the church.

Then, something happened that I did not anticipate. The many responsibilities that I had as a manager began to increase and the demands of the corporation on my personal time began to distract me from the Lord. I found myself focusing more on the company's bottom line than focusing on the Lord and growing in my walk with Him. I was losing sight of the ultimate goal. I was becoming increasingly frustrated. So, I did the only thing that I could do. I asked the Lord for help.

I think it is helpful to express our heart to the Lord like David did. David in the midst of all of his responsibilities as king of Israel wrote **Psalm 27:4**, ***"One thing I have asked from the LORD, that I shall seek; that I may dwell in the house of the LORD all the days of my life, to behold the beauty of the LORD and to meditate in His temple."*** I think it is okay to pray the same prayers that David prayed. After all, he was a man after God's own heart.

Shortly after my cry for help, the Lord laid upon my heart a new goal. I wanted to fully use my spiritual gifts for His glory. I felt a strong pull from the Lord to leave my secular job, which I also considered a ministry, to serve Him as a pastor within one of His churches. I followed the same principles that I followed before and I committed my heart's desire and myself to the Lord. With the Lord's help I set out to do the first thing first, which in my case was to get out of debt. ***"But one thing I do."***

Over the thirty plus years of walking with the Jesus I can say that by fixing my eyes upon Him and the ultimate goal he has for me, one thing has built upon the other. The testing of my faith along the journey prepared me for the next step in the journey. My first goal prepared me for the second goal and both help prepare me for the ultimate goal. The one thing I have learned in the process, is do the first thing first. Do one thing at a time. Do what you can do today that will keep you focused on the goal. Keep pressing on towards ***"the prize of the upward call of God in Christ Jesus."***

Be convinced that you need the goal, that the goal is worth pursuing and then move towards that goal and do the first thing first. Do what you can do today. Tomorrow will be here soon enough.

Pray as David prayed in **Psalm 27:4**. *“One thing I have asked from the LORD, that I shall seek; that I may dwell in the house of the LORD all the days of my life, to behold the beauty of the LORD and to meditate in His temple.”* When we focus on Jesus and do the first thing first everything else falls into place.

CHAPTER TWENTY-FOUR

PHILIPPIANS 3:12-14

PRESSING ON TOWARD THE GOAL

PART 3

Philippians 3:12-14

“Not that I have already obtained it or have already become perfect, but I press on so that I may lay hold of that for which also I was laid hold of by Christ Jesus. Brethren, I do not regard myself as having laid hold of it yet; but one thing I do: forgetting what lies behind and reaching forward to what lies ahead, I press on toward the goal for the prize of the upward call of God in Christ Jesus.”

As I already mentioned, this passage reveals five steps that keeps us focused so we press on towards the goal of Christlikeness. Christlikeness is *“the goal for the prize of the upward call of God in Christ Jesus”* mentioned in verse 14. Along with applying the five steps in pressing towards the ultimate goal of Christlikeness, we can also apply these five steps to accomplishing any goal in life. So far we have looked at two of the steps.

The first step is to figure out the need. Before we can put our energy into reaching the goal of Christlikeness or any goal for that matter, we must be convinced that we have a personally need to accomplish the goal and that it is worth pursuing. Paul came to that conclusion in verse 12 when he said, *“Not that I have already obtained it or have become perfect, but I press on so that I may lay hold of that for which also I was laid hold of by Christ Jesus.”* Paul understood that he was not fully mature in his walk of faith with Jesus. We must arrive at that conclusion ourselves.

The second step is to do the first thing first. Paul said in verse 13, *“But one thing I do.”* We can only reach the goal of Christlikeness or any goal for that matter, by taking one step at a time. So we need to identify the step that we can take today and then do it. John Mason states: *“Doing the best at this moment puts you in the best place for the next moment.”* He also states, *“Today well lived, will prepare you for both the opportunities and obstacles of tomorrow.”* (Taken from *Conquering An Enemy Called Average*, pages 31-32. Copyright © 1996 by John Mason. Tulsa,

Oklahoma: Published by Insight International). I agree with his perspective. Focus on what you can do today to reach the goal. Ruth Schabacker once said, *“Each day comes bearing its own gifts. Untie the ribbons.”* We are to set our eyes on the goal and do what we can today, do the first thing first. We are to take another step towards the goal today.

FORGET THE FORMER

Paul gives us the third step to take in **verse 13** when he said, *“forgetting what lies behind.”* We are to set our eyes on the goal, do what we can do today to reach that goal and forget yesterday. The third step is to forget the former.

That was the first thing Paul needed to do so he could press on towards the goal of Christlikeness. Sometimes it is the first thing that we need to do so we can press on towards the goal of Christlikeness or any other goal for that matter. *“Forgetting what lies behind.”* Paul is not saying forget in the sense of erasing the past from your memory. That is not what he did. In fact, he was able to recall his past in great detail as he did in **Philippians 3:5-6**, as well as several other places in Scripture.

Most of us certainly have the same recall ability. Although I must admit, the older I become the more I appreciate what a senior citizen told me once. He said, *“You know the greatest thing about growing old?”* I said, *“No, what is that?”* He said, *“You get to meet so many new people.”* Of course he was implying that he forgot whom he met yesterday, therefore he was constantly meeting new people every day.

What Paul meant by saying he was *“forgetting what lies behind”* was that he no longer let his past prevent or discourage him from pressing on towards the goal. Certainly Paul had a lot to forget as far as his past was concerned. Especially when it came to all the Christian families he ruined when he entered *“house after house, and dragging off men and women”* putting *“them into prison”* in Jerusalem (**Acts 8:3**, **Acts 26:9-11**) to be executed for their faith in Christ. He was constantly reminded that when he came to faith in Christ he ticked off the religious leaders in Jerusalem. The Pharisees were out to get him. They are the ones that got him thrown into prison.

There were also consequences for Paul’s actions that needed to be forgotten. He didn’t spend much time in Damascus after he first met Jesus. A few people remembered his past. He escaped with his life by being lowered over the city’s wall in a basket (**Acts 9:23-28**). He didn’t spend much time in Jerusalem. That is where he was arrested for his faith originally that led to five years of imprisonment ending up in Rome waiting for a trial before Caesar.

Paul forgot his past in the sense that he no longer let his past discourage him from pressing on towards the goal of Christlikeness. He broke the power of the past by living in Christ one day at a time. He focused on the future. We can certainly do the same.

John Mason has a chapter in his book entitled “There is No Future in The Past.” He states, *“If you look back too much, you’ll soon be heading that way.”* He also said, *“Your destiny and call in life is always forward, never backward.”* (Taken from *Conquering An Enemy Called Average*, page 79. Copyright © 1996 by John Mason. Tulsa, Oklahoma: Published by Insight International). We cannot change the past. It is water that has already flowed under the bridge. The past is always going to be the way it was.

However, if we love the Lord and keep our focus on Him, then by God's grace He *"causes all things to work together for good"* (**Romans 8:28**). That is what He did for Joseph in **Genesis 45:1-15**. In **verse 5** Joseph told his brothers, *"Now do not be grieved or angry with yourselves, because you sold me here, for God sent me before you to preserve life."* You may recall that Joseph's brothers sold him into slavery when he was seventeen years old (**Genesis 37:1-28**). An Egyptian, an officer of Pharaoh named Potiphar, bought him (**Genesis 39:1**). Then, Potiphar's wife falsely accused him of sexual assault (**Genesis 39:2-20**) and he was sent to prison for thirteen years for something he never did (**Genesis 41:46**). Joseph could have gotten discouraged, bitter, angry at God and people, but he didn't. Joseph saw his past as God's hand redirecting him to a greater accomplishment, as he became the second most powerful person in Egypt. Joseph kept his focus on God and God caused his past to work together for something good.

If you press on towards the goal by looking backwards chances are the path you take is going to be crooked, wavering all over the place. Jesus said in **Luke 9:62**, *"No one, after putting his hand to the plow and looking back, is fit for the kingdom of God."* A farmer once told me that the way you plow a straight line is by fixing your eyes on an object off in the distance, at the other end of the field, and then plow straight towards that object. We are to fix your eyes on the goal, on Jesus, do what you can do today to press towards the goal and forget yesterday. We are to fix our eyes on the target, the goal of the upward call of God in Christ Jesus. As we are told in **Proverbs 3:6**, *"In all your ways acknowledge Him"* (in other words, know Him personally, be in fellowship with Him and recognize His Sovereign hand at work in your life today) *and He will make your paths straight.* Take your eyes off of yesterday; fix them upon Jesus and plow forward.

Don't let the past discourage you from pressing on towards the goal. When people are depressed it is usually because they are living in the past. We sometimes have the misconception that yesterday was a better day than today. The truth of the matter is, today is the best day we have. Today is the only day we have to press on, towards the goal. **Ecclesiastes 7:10** says, *"Do not say, 'Why is it that the former days were better than these?' For it is not from wisdom that you ask about this."* We can certainly learn from the past, but we are not to live in the past. We are not to dwell on the past. If we do, then our past is going to hold us back from moving forward towards the goal. The past is the past. Accept the consequences of the past; learn what you can from the past and press on towards the goal of Christlikeness. If you don't you're going to get depressed and discouraged.

There have been times in my life when I needed to make a conscious decision to let go of my failures, certainly learn from them and then move forward focused on the goal. A few years ago I was assigned as the Project Architect overseeing the design and engineering for a complex of 25 buildings in a foreign country. I had a team of designers, architects and engineers working with me on the project. One of the buildings on the project was a large two-story control center that was the heart of the entire project. Everything in that building was to be built out of noncombustible material. They did not want to take any risk that the building would catch on fire for any reason.

The construction of the building was nearly finished when one of the construction workers decided to put a torch to some of the scrap drywall lying on the ground. To everyone's surprise the drywall went up in flames. That meant that all of the drywall in that two-story building was

combustible and had to be ripped out and replaced. The cost of the rework, the purchasing and shipping of the correct drywall and the delays it caused to the project exceeded a hundred thousand dollars, not to mention the damage it created with our client relationship.

The Project Manager got on the next plane and flew back to our office here in California. He was as mad as I have ever seen anyone. Upon his arrival he called me into his office and asked, *“Who was responsible.”* I told him, *“I was.”* He said, *“No, I don’t think you understand. This has cost our company over a hundred thousand dollars. I want you to leave this office and come back in thirty minutes with the name of the person who was responsible.”* I could have found a scapegoat. I could have pointed the finger at someone else. I was certain that the person named would be fired. I returned to his office after thirty minutes. I told him, *“There is no need for me to find another name. I am the one in charge. I am the one who checked and certified the specifications. It is my professional stamp and signature on the construction documents. It was my fault.”* He was outraged and told me to get out of his office, which I did.

I did not see or hear from him again until the close of day on the Friday of that week. He called me back into his office. Now, I knew that was the time that most people were fired or laid off. I walked into his office and sat down. He said, *“In all of my years in this profession I have never seen anyone in your position accept the full responsibility for such a major mistake. Every other person that I know would have found the subordinate who made the mistake and taken the appropriate action. I appreciate your honesty.”* He said, *“Quite frankly, we need more people like you in this company.”* I was surprised by his response. I then asked, *“What is next?”* His answer, *“fail forward.”* In essence, what he told me was to learn from my mistake. Find a way to minimize the cost of my mistake. Teach my people what they did wrong and move on. He encouraged me not to let yesterday keep me from being the best that I could be today. He did not want yesterday to discourage me, but rather he wanted yesterday to be a motivator to press on towards excellence. In other words, forget what lies behind.

He was encouraging, yet there would be consequences. My other bosses were fully informed. In their minds the jury was still out. My future with the company was being scrutinized and I knew my job was in jeopardy. There was no one that felt worse about the situation than I. For a long time I thought of myself as one big professional failure. If they determined after the project was complete to let me go or redirect my career path, I knew they were fully justified in doing so. I had already made up my mind to accept, without complaint, any actions they deemed necessary.

However, as time went on I became even more determined to reach my goals even if it meant leaving the company and reaching them in another way, or even if it meant reevaluating my goals and setting new goals. I was not fired, however my promotion and salary increases were delayed for some time. Also, our client made it clear that I would not do any more work for them.

After the project was completed I was assigned to a similar project on the North Slope of Alaska. The buildings on that project were not only to be built out of noncombustible materials, but they also had to withstand temperatures that were 60 degrees below zero. You can be assured that I did not make the same mistake again.

I learned some valuable lessons through that experience. To successfully reach a goal we must fix our eyes on the goal, do what we can to press on towards the goal, one step at a time,

and forget what lies behind. Certainly learn from the past, but fail forward. Don't let your past hold you back from pursuing the goal. Accept the consequences for any wrong actions and move forward.

As Christians we are to fail forward. Every one of us has a past. Don't let that past discourage you from pursuing the ultimate goal that Jesus has for you. Confess any sins that you commit and repent from those sins (**1 John 1:9**) and move forward. Fix your eyes on ***“the goal for the prize of the upward call of God in Christ Jesus”***, do what you can do today to press on towards the goal, one step at a time, and forget what lies behind. The time wasted fretting over the past is always better spent praying, planning, preparing and working towards the goal. We have a great promise -- there is victory in Jesus!

PHILIPPIANS 3:12-14

PRESSING ON TOWARDS THE GOAL PART 4

Philippians 3:12-14

“Not that I have already obtained it or have already become perfect, but I press on so that I may lay hold of that for which also I was laid hold of by Christ Jesus. Brethren, I do not regard myself as having laid hold of it yet; but one thing I do: forgetting what lies behind and reaching forward to what lies ahead, I press on toward the goal for the prize of the upward call of God in Christ Jesus.”

We now see the final two steps to take that keeps us focused, so we press on towards the goal of Christlikeness, *“the goal for the prize of the upward call of God in Christ Jesus.”* The first is pressing on and the second is reaching forward.

PRESSING ON

In verse 12 Paul said, *“**Lpress on** so that I may lay hold of that for which also I was laid hold of by Christ Jesus.”* Then in verse 14 he said, *“**Lpress on** toward the goal for the prize of the upward call of God **in Christ** Jesus.”* The term *“press on”* in the Greek refers to an intensive endeavor. Paul used the same Greek word in Philippians 3:6, which is translated *“persecutor.”* The same zeal, the same intense effort and the same determination that Paul used in chasing down Christians and persecuting the church he now put into pursuing *“the goal for the prize of the upward call of God in Christ Jesus.”* Paul put an extreme effort into making sure he was maturing in his walk with Jesus.

After Paul had his encounter with Jesus Christ that resulted in Paul trusting Christ as his personal Savior and Lord, his focus and energy was redirected. His focus and energy was no longer spent on persecuting Christians, but rather on becoming more Christlike. His energy was no longer spent on trying to destroy the church, but rather on building up the church and the king-

dom of God. Instead of fighting against Christ, he fought for Christ. His direction in life changed.

The same thing happens to every person who loves Jesus, who has asked Him to forgive them of their sins and have asked Him to be their Savior and Lord. Instead of fighting against Jesus, we fight for Jesus. Our direction and priorities in life change. They become more like His. We find ourselves putting our energy into maturing in our faith and walking by faith with Him.

For the first twenty-seven years of my life I did not have a personal relationship with Jesus Christ. I did not read the Bible and I did not go to church. My thoughts were on worldly things and not on heavenly things.

However, when I, by faith, in prayer, asked Jesus to forgive me of my sins and to be my Savior and Lord my thought life changed. When I finally believed in my heart that He died for my sins and was raised from the dead on the third day, as we are told to do in **Romans 10:9-13**, I became a new person. I became a new creation in Christ. In **2 Corinthians 5:17** we are told, ***“Therefore if anyone is in Christ, he is a new creature; the old things passed away; behold, new things have come.”*** I began reading the Bible and understanding it for the first time in my life. I could not get enough of God’s Word and thirty plus years later I still cannot get enough of God’s Word. I started going to church and I made church attendance a top priority in my life. The only time I missed church was when I was on vacation or I was too sick to get to church. My thoughts turned from worldly things to heavenly things (see **Colossians 3:1-4**). However, I must confess that I am still growing in my faith, I am still learning to walk by faith and I am still learning how to serve Christ more fully using my spiritual gift. So, ***“I press on toward the goal for the prize of the upward call of God in Christ Jesus.”***

If we are to press on towards this goal, then how do we do it? What are the things that we should be doing today so we accomplish the goal that God has for us in Christ? The term ***“press on”*** in the Greek (***“diōkō”***) can also be translated ***“pursue.”*** When we look up the verses where this word is used we discover what we should be doing today to press on towards Christlikeness.

- In **Romans 14:19**, we are told to (press on) or ***“pursue the things which make for peace and the building up of one another.”*** The building up of one another means we are to help each other grow up in our walk with Jesus. I had someone, who I was very close with, tell me they did not need to go to church. They said they could read their Bible, pray and worship the Lord on their own without going to church. That is true, but the person who does that, most likely, are not going to be involved in the process of ***“building up one another.”*** When we are involved in peoples lives, helping them mature in their walk with Jesus and in helping them learn how to use their spiritual gifts in serving the Lord, our own maturity level rises to another level. Christians cannot mature in Christ by becoming their own spiritual island.
- In **1 Corinthians 14:1**, we are told to (press on) or ***“pursue love...”*** We are to purposely put into practice the love chapter of the Bible, **1 Corinthians 13:4-8**. We are to put our energy into loving one another like Jesus. We are to mature in our love for one another. That is part of the pressing on towards the goal of Christlikeness.
- In **1 Timothy 6:11**, we are told to (press on) or ***“...pursue righteousness, godliness, faith, love, perseverance and gentleness.”***

- In **2 Timothy 2:22**, we are told to “...*flee from youthful lusts and (press on or) pursue righteousness, faith, love and peace, with those who call on the Lord from a pure heart.*” In other words, we are to hang out with other Christians who are committed to walking faithfully with Christ.
- In **Hebrews 12:14**, we are told to (press on) or “*Pursue peace with men, and sanctification (or holiness) without which no one will see the Lord.*” To be sanctified or holy means that we are set apart from the sins of this world into a relationship with the only true God through faith in Jesus Christ. If we are not sanctified in Christ we are not getting into heaven. One of the ways we know that we are sanctified in Christ is by the fact that we are pressing on to be more like Christ.

After a careful study of these verses one can only conclude that it is impossible to press on towards the goal that God has for us if we have not put our faith in Christ. We cannot press on towards the goal that God has for us if we are not consistently in the Word and in fellowship with God and in fellowship with His people. We cannot press on towards the goal if we are not putting in the effort to grow up in Christ. We must pursue it. We must press on.

In order for us to press on towards the goal we must make the effort. Notice what we are told in **Hebrews 12:1-2**. “*Therefore, since we have so great a cloud of witness surrounding us, let us also lay aside every encumbrance and the sin which so easily entangles us, and let us run with endurance the race that is set before us, fixing our eyes on Jesus, the author and perfecter of faith, who for the joy set before Him endured the cross, despising the shame, and has sat down at the right hand of the throne of God.*” For us to press on towards the goal we must exercise our spiritual muscles or they will grow weak. We must build up our spiritual endurance, so we can stay in the race over the long haul. We must remain focused on Jesus letting go of what holds us back. We must exercise self-control and not get entangled in sin. It takes persistence and it takes an extreme effort in a world that wants to keep us from growing up in Christ.

I have discovered that the secret to growing up in Christ and the secret to reaching any goal in life is to never let down and never let up. Hold on; hold fast; hold out. Many times success consists of hanging on one minute longer. Work, continuous work and hard work is the only way to accomplish results that last for eternity. Jesus said in **Revelation 2:10**, “*Be faithful until death, and I will give you the crown of life.*” In other words, press on!

REACHING FORWARD

In **verse 13**, Paul gave the last and final step to reaching the goal and it is related to the previous. He said in **verse 13**, “*Reaching forward to what lies ahead.*” The picture that Paul gives us is that of a runner crossing the finish line. It is like an Olympian running a 100-yard dash stretching every muscle, as he or she leans forward to cross the finish line before someone else. Paul is saying that he was stretching every muscle, to the limit, towards the finish line like an Olympic runner. For us, the finish line is the threshold of heaven’s door.

Paul was determined to finish strong. In **2 Timothy 4:7-8** he said, “*I have fought the good fight, I have finished the course, I have kept the faith; in the future there is laid up for me the crown of righteousness, which the Lord, the righteous judge, will award to me on that day; and not only to me, but also to all who have loved His appearing.*” We have very little to do

with the length of our life, but we can have something to do about its width and depth. We can press on! We can reach forward! We can continue to grow up in Christ. We can finish strong.

Don't get distracted by the crowd around you. Don't lose sight of the finish line. It takes concentration and it takes determination and it takes conviction to finish strong. As Paul said, "***Fight the good fight of faith; take hold of the eternal life to which you were called...***" (**1 Timothy 6:11**).

- Figure out the need. Recognize that the goal is worth pursuing and that you need to pursue the goal of being more like Christ.
- Do the first thing first, do what you can today – tomorrow will be here soon enough.
- Forget what lies behind. Don't let your past hold you back or discourage you from pressing on towards the goal.
- Press on. Put in an extreme effort.
- Press on towards those things that make for peace. Keep unity within the church. Keep harmony within your family.
- Press on towards the building up of one another. Get involved using your spiritual gifts.
- Press on towards love. Put into practice **1 Corinthians 13:4-8** within the church and within your homes and within your workplace.
- Press on towards righteousness. Live according to God's Biblical standards.
- Press on towards godliness. Stop practicing sin. Be more Christ like.
- Press on towards faith. Grow in your walk of faith with Jesus. Help lead others to faith in Jesus. Learn how to lead others to faith in Jesus.
- Press on towards perseverance. Don't give up. Hang in there. Be determined to finish strong.
- Press on towards gentleness.
- Press on towards fellowship with other Christians that have the same commitment to prayerfully and faithfully walk with Jesus. Make church attendance a priority.
- Press on towards sanctification or holiness. Walk as Jesus would walk. Dare to be holy for Jesus. Stand out in a crowd of unbelievers.
- Reach forward. Stretch every fiber in your body towards the goal line. Finish strong.

There is victory in Jesus!

PHILIPPIANS 3:15-19

EXAMPLES VS ENEMIES OF CHRIST

Philippians 3:15-19

“Let us therefore, as many as are perfect, have this attitude; and if in anything you have a different attitude, God will reveal that also to you; however, let us keep living by the same standard to which we have attained. Brethren, join in following my example, and observe those who walk according to the pattern you have in us. For many walk, of whom I often told you, and now tell you even weeping, that they are enemies of the cross of Christ, whose end is destruction, whose god is their appetite, and whose glory is in their shame, who set their minds on earthly things.”

In Philippians 3:15-19, Paul encouraged all the Christians in Philippi as well as all believers to follow his example. There were those who were attempting to draw Christians away from what Paul was teaching and exemplified. There were those who tried to draw people away from the grace of God and the work of Christ upon the cross. In tears, Paul called them *“enemies of the cross of Christ.”* Paul became very emotional because he knew their end was going to be destruction, they were on a plight towards eternal condemnation.

EXAMPLES OF CHRIST

In verse 12, Paul said he was not perfect in his walk of faith with Jesus. Then, in verse 15 he includes himself with those who are perfect. He said, *“let us, therefore, as many as are perfect, have this attitude.”* At first glance it seems as though Paul contradicted himself. However, he didn't. There are two aspects to our perfection or maturity in Christ. There is a practical perfection and there is a positional perfection.

In verse 12, Paul referred to the practical perfection. In other words, as long as we walk in these mortal bodies, we are not perfect in Christ. We are still maturing in our faith and in our relationship with Christ. There was only one who was perfect and that was Jesus Himself. We are

still growing up, day by day, in our walk of faith with Jesus. Therefore, we are to continue, like Paul, pressing on toward the goal of being more Christ like.

In **verse 15**, Paul spoke of our positional perfection. When we place our faith in Christ as our personal Savior and Lord we enter into a position of being *“in Christ”* and thereby found holy and acceptable to God. Not because of righteousness, but rather because of the righteousness of God given to us through faith in Christ (**2 Corinthians 5:21**). All Christians are positionally perfect in Christ. In **Hebrews 10:14** we are told, *“For by one offering He has perfected for all time those who are sanctified.”* That is our position before God because our sins have been forgiven through the redemptive work of Christ upon the cross. We are clothed with the righteousness of Christ and set apart from this world in Christ for God’s purposes and glory. God sees us as being perfect in Christ. Paul spoke of that position in **Philippians 3:8-9**.

That is why Paul could say in **verse 15**, *“Let us therefore, as many as are perfect, have this attitude; and if in anything you have a different attitude, God will reveal that also to you.”* The phrase *“have this attitude”* can be translated, *“continually think like this.”* Paul wanted Christians to be intent on being more like Christ. He wanted them to set their mind on being more like Christ. He also wanted them to continually understand that, in Christ, they were perfect. If they had a different attitude, if they thought any differently, then God would reveal it to them. He would convict them of any wrong attitudes.

God will convict and correct any wrong attitude that we might have through His Word by His Holy Spirit (**2 Timothy 3:16-17**). Christians can sometimes be influenced by ungodly teaching and ungodly behavior. We can get preoccupied with the affairs of this world. We can get distracted with worldly thoughts. Sometimes we begin to question what our relationship with God truly is. Paul is telling us that we must maintain the right attitude in our becoming more like Christ and in our position of being in Christ. If we struggle with this, then God will reveal it to us.

Paul wanted all Christians to have the same attitude that he had. In **verse 16**, he said, *“let us keep living by that same standard to which we have attained.”* In other words, since we are positionally perfect in Christ, then let’s live like it, let’s think like it, let’s keep pursuing the goal of being more like Jesus. Let’s walk as Jesus would walk if he were here today (**1 John 2:6**).

Paul gave a personal plea in **verse 17** when he said, *“Brethren, join in following my example, and observe those who walk according to the pattern you have in us.”* Paul presented himself and others as examples to follow. Perhaps he was referring to Timothy and Luke; or perhaps people like Epaphroditus and Lydia who already had a reputation as those who followed Paul’s example. Paul wanted Christians to be as focused as he was. He wanted Christians to put in the same effort that he did in pursuing *“the goal for the prize of the upward call of God in Christ Jesus.”* In **1 Corinthians 11:1** Paul said, *“Be imitators of me, just as I am of Christ.”* Paul wanted those who were perfect in Christ to pursue the perfection of Christ here and now.

In **verse 17** Paul said, *“observe those who walk according to the pattern you have in us.”* There are some questions that need to be asked:

- As parents and grandparents, would you want your children or grandchildren to walk with Jesus as you are currently walking with Jesus? Are you setting the right example for them to follow?

- Are you showing your children or grandchildren, by your example, the right attitude to have about church?
- Would you be embarrassed if your children, grandchildren, neighbors, family members, brothers and sister in Christ, or work associates told others that they were following your example?
- How is your walk with Jesus? In **1 John 2:6** we are told, *“the one who says he abides in Him ought himself to walk in the same manner as He walked.”* Can people look at you and the way you live and see Christ’s reflection?
- Are you letting the Holy Spirit take the Word of God and transform you into a person who is more like Christ today, than yesterday?

If not, God wants to talk with you. He will do whatever it takes to get your attention and to get you back on track pursuing the goal for the prize of the upward call of God in Christ Jesus. God sent His Son to pay the price for our sins upon the cross so we might pursue the goal of Christlikeness. It is prideful and arrogant to think or determine in our hearts that we don’t need to put the effort into pursuing Christlikeness. We need to study the Word and serve the Lord and be sensitive to the leading of His Holy Spirit if we are going to be more like Christ. We need to follow Paul’s example and have the same attitude that he had.

ENEMIES OF THE CROSS

In **verse 18** Paul went on to say, *“For many walk, of whom I often told you, and now tell you even weeping, that they are enemies of the cross of Christ.”* Who are the enemies of the cross of Christ? Paul did not name names, nor did he identify a certain group of people. Perhaps his thoughts went back to what he said earlier in **Philippians 3:2** when he said, *“Beware of the dogs, beware of evil workers, beware of the false circumcision.”* People who opposed Christianity, who promoted ungodliness and immorality as normal life styles, and who try to put people under a religious ritualistic system for salvation, a system of works rather than grace, are enemies of the cross.

Whoever it was, whatever organization it was, Paul said they were enemies of the cross. They had rejected the redemptive work of Jesus Christ upon the cross as the only way into heaven. They rejected the gift of God, which was forgiveness of sin and eternal life through the shed blood of Christ. They rejected God’s love and grace. They rejected God’s Son, thereby rejecting God Himself. They most likely opted for a system of works for salvation, rather than God’s grace through faith in Jesus for salvation.

Whoever they were Paul identified the things that characterized their life and their ultimate destination in **verse 19**. First, he said their *“end is destruction.”* All of their efforts in life would conclude with them being eternally separated from God. They would be tossed into the lake of fire, unless they repented and received Christ as their personal Savior and Lord while they still had breath to say I believe. The indication in Paul’s statement is that they had already rejected Jesus as Savior and Lord. They had the opportunity to believe and chose not to. They heard the truth and rejected the truth. The redemption offered by Jesus Christ was no longer an option that they would consider. Instead, they worked and taught against the cross of Christ. Their actions and teaching were antichrist.

Second, Paul said their **“god is their appetite.”** Their sensual desires and fleshly appetites and fleshly accomplishments became their god, it was what they worshipped or exalted above the true God. They had a distorted and perverted idea about who God was and His holiness. These things could easily lead to distorted views about marriage, family, worship, and Biblical interpretation, which in turn could lead to a works based religion, paganism, humanism, or Gnosticism.

Third, Paul said their **“glory is in their shame.”** John MacArthur said, *“This is the most extreme form of wickedness – when the sinner’s most wretched conduct before God is his highest point of self-exaltation.”* (Taken from *The MacArthur New Testament Commentary Philippians*, page 259. Copyright © 2001 by John MacArthur, Jr. Published by Moody Press, Chicago, Illinois. Used by permission of the publisher. All rights reserved). We need to understand that boasting in one’s accomplishments, *“Look at what I did,” “Look at what I did for you,” “Look at me, me, me or I, I, I,” “See what I am about to do...”* is pure arrogance (**James 4:13-16**). It leaves God out of our lives. Arrogant pride is the equivalent of boasting in and of ones own sin. The result is the eternal destruction of the soul.

Fourth, Paul said they **“set their mind on earthly things.”** They were secular in their thinking, which caused their actions to be secular as well. God was not in the equation. They did not have Jesus on their mind. There was no evidence of the Holy Spirit in their lives. They were consumed with worldly thoughts and worldly things. We are told in **1 John 2:15**, **“Do not love the world nor the things in the world. If anyone loves the world, the love of the Father is not in him.”**

These people were enemies of the cross. As a result, they were running towards eternal destruction. They were running away from the cross. As Jesus said in **Matthew 7:13**, **“Enter through the narrow gate; for the gate is wide and the way is broad that leads to destruction, and there are many who enter through it.”**

This is a stark contrast to what Paul taught Christians to do. Paul, along with all true believers and followers of Christ are **“to press on toward the goal for the prize of the upward call of God in Christ Jesus.”**

As Paul’s thoughts momentarily considered those who were not believers in Christ, he began to weep. When he considered their ultimate end of destruction, he wept. When he considered that they were on a plight of eternal condemnation he wept.

As I studied this passage the Holy Spirit convicted my heart. It was as though the Lord asked me: *“When was the last time that you wept for those who do not know Me as their Savior and Lord?” “Where is your compassion for the lost – those who will experience eternal destruction of their soul unless they repent and put their faith in Me?”* I have asked the Lord to help me look upon the harvest field as He looks upon the harvest field, with eyes to see people with a heart of compassion (**Matthew 9:36**). I am asking the Lord to give me a renewed passion for the lost, how about you? When was the last time that you wept for those who are on a path of eternal destruction without Jesus? O, how we need to follow Paul’s example!

If we are sincere about being more like Christ, then we need to see unbelievers as Paul did and as Jesus did. If we truly want to follow Paul’s example, we should seek and ask for a heart of compassion for those who don’t believe in Jesus. We need a heart that would cause us to weep

over their plight of eternal destruction. O, how we need to follow Paul's example! Until we do, there will be no revival in this nation. We will lose our godly heritage as a nation.

CHAPTER TWENTY-SEVEN

PHILIPPIANS 3:20-21

AN EXTREME MAKE OVER

Philippians 3:20-21

“For our citizenship is in heaven, from which also we eagerly wait for a Savior, the Lord Jesus Christ; who will transform the body of our humble state into conformity with the body of His glory, by the exertion of the power that He has even to subject all things to Himself.”

In Philippians Chapter Three, Paul certainly had his focus on *“the surpassing value of knowing Christ Jesus”* his Lord (**verse 8**). It was because of Paul’s faith in Jesus that he received *“the righteousness which comes from God on the basis of faith”* (**verse 9**). It was Paul’s faith in Jesus that caused him to *“press on toward the goal for the prize of the upward call of God in Christ Jesus”* (**verse 14**). Because of Paul’s faith in Jesus he knew that he was scheduled for an extreme eternal make over.

In **verses 20-21**, Paul takes us to the pinnacle of his letter to the Philippians. He takes us to the zenith or mountaintop of his faith. He shares with us the very thing that motivated him to reach *“forward to what lies ahead”* (**verse 13**) even though he was chained to a Roman soldier and waiting for a trial before Caesar that could end his life on earth. Paul realized, as should everyone who has put his or her faith in Jesus, he was scheduled for an extreme make over that could happen at any moment.

A NEW CITIZENSHIP

The first aspect to this extreme make over took place at the moment of Paul’s conversion. Paul was given a new citizenship in heaven, along with everyone who has trusted Jesus Christ as his or her Savior and Lord. Paul said in **verse 20**, *“For our citizenship is in heaven.”*

The people in Philippi understood the value of citizenship and what it meant to be a citizen. When a baby was born in Philippi its name was registered on the legal records as a citizen of Rome. That citizenship was irrevocable. Everyone who was a citizen of Rome was protected by the laws of Rome and was given certain privileges as a citizen of Rome. As a citizen of Rome

they were expected to worship and bow down to the Caesar of Rome. The people of Philippi understood the value and the expectations of their citizenship.

In a similar way, when we put our faith in Jesus Christ as our Savior and Lord we are born again. Our names are written on the legal records in heaven as a citizen of God's kingdom. Our names are written in the Lamb's book of life. In **Philippians 4:3**, Paul talked about his fellow workers as those *"whose names are in the book of life."* In **Luke 10:20**, as Jesus spoke to his seventy disciples, who just returned from their first outreach ministry, He instructed them saying, *"rejoice that your names are recorded in heaven."* In **Revelation 21:27**, as part of the description of our new home in heaven, we are told that *"only those whose names are written in the Lamb's book of life"* will enter into it. Part of Paul's and our extreme make over is the fact that our citizenship is now in heaven.

As part of that heavenly citizenship comes certain privileges, expectations and responsibilities as it was in the Roman colony of Philippi. For example:

- The citizens of Rome were expected to obey Roman law as established by Caesar and documented in various decrees. We however, as citizens of heaven, are expected to obey heaven's law as established by God in His Word.
- The citizens of Roman were expected to honor Caesar. We however, as citizens of heaven, are expected to honor our King of kings and the Lord of lords, Jesus Christ as well as God the Father.
- Being a citizen of Rome was irrevocable. Being a citizen of heaven is also irrevocable. In **Luke 10:20** when Jesus told His disciples that their names were *"recorded in heaven"* the word *"recorded"* is in the perfect tense in the Greek transcripts indicating that our names are once-for-all written and stand written. Our citizenship in heaven is irrevocable.
- Paul's Roman citizenship brought him before Caesar. Our citizenship in heaven will bring us before Jesus.
- Being a citizen of Rome meant that you were lead by the country's leaders. As citizens of heaven we are lead by God's Holy Spirit.
- The citizens of Rome lived for the glory of Rome. We however, as citizens of heaven, live for the glory God.

We are passing through this world as citizens of heaven and our lives should reflect that citizenship.

A NEW HOPE

The second aspect to Paul's, and our extreme make over, is the fact that we eagerly wait for Christ's return. We are given a new hope and a new confident expectation. Jesus is our hope. Jesus and His return for us is our greatest expectation. Paul said in **verse 20**, *"from which also we eagerly wait for a Savior, the Lord Jesus Christ."*

If we are eagerly waiting for His return, then that means we expect Him to arrive at any time. Our citizenship is in heaven and our Lord and our King is coming back for us at any moment. In **John 14:1-3** Jesus said, *"Do not let your heart be troubled; believe in God, believe also in Me. In My Father's house are many dwelling places; if it were not so, I would have told you; for I go to prepare a place for you. If I go and prepare a place for you, I will come again and re-*

ceive you to Myself, that where I am, there you may be also.” When Jesus completes our new home and when the Father gives him the go ahead, He is coming back. There is no other prophetic event in history that needs fulfilled before Jesus returns. He can come at any moment. That is why Paul said that he was eagerly waiting to see Jesus.

If we truly believe that Jesus can come at any moment that should be motivation enough the live our lives here and now in such a way that when He comes He will be honored and we won't be ashamed. If we truly believe that Jesus can come at any moment, then we should have the same attitude that Paul had. We should follow his example and *“press on toward the goal for the prize of the upward call of God in Christ Jesus.”*

A NEW BODY

Before Jesus arrives to set up His kingdom on earth, all of those who love His appearing will receive the third aspect of their extreme make over. In **verse 21**, Paul said that Jesus *“will transform the body of our humble state into conformity with the body of His glory.”* Notice what we are told in **1 Corinthians Chapter 15**. In **verse 35** it says, *“But someone will say, ‘How are the dead raised? And with what kind of body do they come?’”* In **verses 42-44** we are told, *“So also is the resurrection of the dead. It is sown a perishable body, it is raised an imperishable body; it is sown in dishonor, it is raised in glory; it is sown in weakness, it is raised in power; it is sown a natural body, it is raised a spiritual body.”* Then we are told in **verses 51-53**, *“Behold, I tell you a mystery; we will not all sleep, but we will all be changed, in a moment, in the twinkling of an eye, at the last trumpet; for the trumpet will sound, and the dead will be raised imperishable, and we will be changed. For this perishable must put on the imperishable, and this mortal must put on immortality.”* Notice also what we are told in **1 Thessalonians 4:15-17**, *“For this we say to you by the word of the Lord, that we who are alive and remain until the coming of the Lord, will not precede those who have fallen asleep. For the Lord Himself will descend from heaven with a shout, with the voice of the archangel and with the trumpet of God, and the dead in Christ will rise first. Then we who are alive and remain will be caught up together with them in the clouds to meet the Lord in the air, and so we shall always be with the Lord.”* To that I say *“glory hallelujah!”*

My wife and I were having a Bar-B-Q one night with some of our Christian friends at the beach. We were cooking hot dogs and hamburgers and one of our friends was playing a guitar as we sang praises to our Lord. It was dark, the fire was going and we were enjoying our time of worship, when suddenly we heard an incredible sound. We thought it was the trumpet of God. It sent shivers up our back. For a brief moment we thought we were going up. We thought we were getting new bodies. But then, we discovered that there was a railroad track on the other side of the bushes and what we heard was the horn of the train. That experience made me realize how quickly Jesus can come back. It made me realize that He will return when we least expect Him to return and we should be ready, eagerly waiting for His return and our new glorified bodies.

Have you ever wondered what our new bodies will be like? Our new bodies will be like the one Jesus had after His resurrection:

- It will be in conformity with the body of His glory (**verse 21**).

- It will be able to appear or disappear at will. It will be able to come and go unhindered by space, matter, time or gravity. With it we will be able to walk through stone walls and then sit and eat.
- We will be given bodies where sin, weakness, sorrow, disappointment, pain, suffering, doubt, fear, temptation, hate and failure give way to perfect joy, pleasures, knowledge, comfort and love. It will never decay. It will be eternal.

Now that is what I call an extreme make over.

Jesus said in **John 6:39-40**, ***“This is the will of Him who sent Me, that of all that he has given Me I lose nothing, but raise it up on the last day. For this is the will of My Father, that everyone who beholds the Son and believes in Him will have eternal life, and I Myself will raise him up on the last day.”*** Jesus is coming back! If you know Him as your personal Savior and Lord, then you are scheduled to have an extreme make over.

BY JESUS' POWER

This extreme make over is done by the greatest designer of all time – Jesus Himself. The one who spoke all of creation into existence by the word of His power will in a similar way exert that same power and transform our bodies into conformity with the body of His glory in a twinkling of an eye. Paul said in **verse 21**, ***“by the exertion of the power that He has even to subject all things to Himself.”*** Jesus is Lord of all things, including life, space, time and matter. All things are subject to Him and He ***“upholds all things by the word of His power”*** (**Hebrews 1:3**).

The power that He will exert to transform our bodies into conformity with the body of His glory is as effortless to Him as speaking a word. When we consider what He did in our original creation, then the new creation of our eternal bodies will be a piece of cake. John Phillips said:

- *“One molecule of hemoglobin – the protein in the blood that carries oxygen to every part of the body contains: 3032 atoms of carbon, 4812 atoms of hydrogen, 780 atoms of nitrogen, 4 atoms of iron, 880 atoms of oxygen, and 12 atoms of sulfur.”*
- *“All 9520 atoms”* contained in one molecule of hemoglobin (my clarification) *“have to be hooked to each other in a certain order and in exactly the right way just to make one molecule essential to physical life.”*
- The human body is amazing – designed by God Almighty. Phillips goes on to say: *“In a human body some three billion cells die and are replaced every minute. The human brain contains some thirty-billion cells. The skin has about a million cells per square inch. And the veins some twenty-trillion cells go about their business.”*

Phillips also states: *“That we should live at all is a miracle. That we should live again is no greater miracle. God who made us once can easily make us again.”* (Taken from *Exploring Ephesians & Philippians* [pages 152-153] © Copyright 1995 by John Phillips. Published by Kregel Publications, Grand Rapids, Michigan. Used by permission of the publisher. All rights reserved). As Paul states, ***“By the exertion of the power that He has even to subject all things to Himself.”***

Jesus – the Creator, the Lord of lords, the King of kings, the Savior of the world is going to do an extreme make over on every Christian by the exertion of His power. Are you ready? Do you have an appointment? If not, now is the time. He may return at any moment and if you don't

have an appointment, then when He returns or when you die, you will find that it is too late – His appointment book will be closed. Is your citizenship in heaven? Do you have your name written in the Lambs book of life? If not, now is the time. Receive Him today as your personal Savior and Lord. Be ready for an extreme make over! Jesus can come at any moment.

CHAPTER TWENTY-EIGHT

PHILIPPIANS 4:1-3

IN THIS WAY
PART 1Philippians 4:1-3

“Therefore, my beloved brethren whom I long to see, my joy and crown, in this way stand firm in the Lord, my beloved. I urge Euodia and I urge Syntyche to live in harmony in the Lord. Indeed, true companion, I ask you also to help these women who have shared my struggle in the cause of the gospel, together with Clement also and the rest of my fellow workers, whose names are in the book of life.”

It’s obvious after reading Philippians 4:1-3, Paul had a deep love for the church at Philippi and he was eager to see them again. He tells us that they were his *“joy and his crown.”* They were the flagships for the Christian movement in Europe, a model church. They were the proof that the gospel was real and that Jesus was alive working in the lives of people. They were proof that Jesus was leading His church by His Spirit.

However, there was trouble brewing in the church at Philippi. There was a problem that was far too common within the first century church, as it is today within the twenty-first century church. Paul already eluded to it in Philippians 2:2 when he said, *“make my joy complete by being of the same mind, maintaining the same love, united in spirit, intent on one purpose.”* The problem was that disunity or disharmony had germinated within the church at Philippi. There were two people in the church who were at odds with one another.

Paul mentions them by name. They were Euodia and Syntyche. They were leaders in the church, they both shared Paul’s struggle *“in the cause of the gospel.”* They were *“fellow workers”* for Christ with Paul according to verse 3. Their names were written in the book of life.

I am sure it grieved Paul to humiliate them both by mentioning their names in a letter that would be read publicly to the entire church. However, stronger measures are sometimes needed when the attitude of two people starts to hurt the cause of Christ with unresolved conflict.

There is an observation that is important for us to see. It was something that Paul was well aware of and perhaps why he addressed these two women by name. Whenever someone is committed to fully serving the Lord, like these two women and like Paul, they find themselves on the front line of a ragging battle. That battle, as we are told in **Ephesians 6:12**, *“is not against flesh and blood, but against the rulers, against the powers, against the world forces of this darkness, against the spiritual forces of wickedness in heavenly places.”* Those who are on the front lines of ministry, fully serving the Lord, are targets for a spiritual attack by our adversary. I think Paul understood what was taking place with these two women, they were under attack and they needed to do what he instructed the Ephesians to do in **Ephesians 6:10-11**. They needed to *“be strong in the Lord and in the strength of His might.”* Paul told them to *“put on the full armor of God, so that you will be able to stand firm against the schemes of the devil.”* These two women and the church at Philippi were under attack and they needed each other more than they realized.

When someone is on the front lines of ministry, engaged in this spiritual battle, then that person must not only be totally dependent upon the Lord, but also totally dependent upon those in his or her church. They must rely on their church for prayer, encouragement, financial support, and the willingness to help when needed to carry the load. They need to rely upon the church to cover their backs.

What a person does not want to happen, when they are on the front lines of ministry engaged in this spiritual battle, is to have the church withdraw or withhold its support or begin quarreling amongst itself. There is nothing more disheartening to anyone who is on the front lines of ministry giving their lives for Jesus than to see or hear about the supporting church struggling on the inside. I am sure Paul was grieved when he heard what was going on.

The Philippian church was starting to have some in house differences that needed to stop. The Philippian church was Paul’s joy and he wanted to keep it that way. He wanted his joy to be made complete. He did not need any discouragement or distractions. So, he briefly addressed the issue before concluding his letter. In doing so, he gave some very important direction to all Christians. He told us and then demonstrated to us how to have the right motivation in life that leads to living in harmony with one another and standing firm in the Lord. Paul said in **verse 1** *“in this way”* giving the church the needed instruction and example to follow.

Paul gave some guidelines on how in house differences can be avoided and/or resolved successfully in **verses 1-3**. The first thing is to *“stand firm in the Lord.”*

STAND FIRM IN THE LORD

Paul said in **Philippians 4:1**, *“Therefore ... in this way stand firm in the Lord, my beloved.”* The word *“therefore”* takes our attention back to the preceding verses in **Philippians 3:20-21**. What Paul communicated and exemplified, starting in **Philippians 3:12** and going through **Philippians 4:3**, was brilliant. It was simple yet profound. If you love Jesus it should be a life-changing concept. Paul’s motivation for pressing *“on towards the goal for the prize of the upward call of God in Christ Jesus”* and his motivation to *“stand firm in the Lord”* was two fold.

- The first was, his constant awareness that his citizenship was secure in heaven and that he should live in a way that reflected that citizenship as being a part of God’s kingdom.

- And second, he expected his Lord and his King, Jesus Christ, to come back at any moment. He eagerly waited for Jesus who would come in the twinkling of an eye to call him into His presence and transform his earthly body into the body of Christ's glory.

Paul already told the church at Philippi and us in **Philippians 3:17**, *“join in following my example, and observe those who walk according to the pattern you have in us.”* The example that Paul wanted us to follow was this:

- If you expect Jesus at any moment, then your life should reflect that expectation.
- Your life should reflect the fact that your citizenship is in heaven.

Therefore, *“stand firm in the Lord.”* Hold your position. Don't get out of line. Don't do or say something that you would be ashamed of if Jesus returned at that moment. When our focus is on Jesus, and when we expect Him at any moment, we change our behavior. We change our outlook on life. It is no longer our agenda but His agenda that matters.

LIVE IN HARMONY IN THE LORD

Paul urged Euodia and Syntyche in **Philippians 4:2**, *“to live in harmony in the Lord.”* We are not told what the issue was that caused friction between these two fellow workers for Christ. It probably was not a doctrinal issue or Paul would have addressed it. My guess is they were making a mountain out of a molehill. The process usually goes something like this:

- Someone gets hurt or frustrated.
- Some unkind words are exchanged on the matter and no one repents of their unkindness.
- They get their spouses or family members involved.
- Then, they get their close friends within the church to take sides or agree with them.
- Then, the church begins to lose its harmony, its unity and its stability.
- Then, visitors or other church members decide to go somewhere else.
- Then, the church loses its effectiveness for Christ. Those outside the church know that we are Christ's disciples by the love we have for one another not by our arguments.

Paul said, *“Live in harmony in the Lord.”* In other words, have the Lord's best in mind not your self in mind. Walk by the leading of God's Holy Spirit according to His Word reflecting the fruit of the Spirit, which is love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, gentleness, self-control. Walk in a way that shows that you are expecting Jesus to return at any moment.

Paul knew that if these two women got right with the Lord, they would be right with each other. He knew if they had the right motivation to their Christian lives, they would stand firm and live in harmony in the Lord.

SHARE THE BURDEN AND HELP

Sometimes in order for two people who are in disagreement to come back to a place of being in harmony with each other, help is needed. A third party is sometimes required to step in and help. Unfortunately that was required at Philippi. So Paul asked his *“true companion”* to help in **verse 3**. We are not sure who this *“true companion”* was. The Greek word used for the phrase *“true companion”* (*“suzugos”*) can also be translated *“yoke fellow.”* It refers to someone who shares a common burden. The word describes one of two oxen pulling the same load. Perhaps it was one

of the elders within the church. Maybe it was Epaphroditus (**Philippians 2:25**) who returned with Paul's letter from Rome, or perhaps Timothy who Paul intended to send (**Philippians 2:19**) as well.

Paul wanted these two fellow workers to get their eyes back on Jesus, and back on the goal of Christlikeness, and on the fact that their names were written "*in the book of life*" (**verse 3**). He wanted them to live as though Christ would return at any moment. He wanted them to live like citizens of heaven bringing honor to God. He wanted them to live and walk "*in the Lord.*"

Paul knew that if they continued in the direction they were headed, Satan would take advantage of the situation, if he hadn't already. So he told his "*true companion*" to intervene and he told the church and these two women to stand firm in the Lord and to live in harmony in the Lord just as Paul taught and demonstrated.

Paul said, "*in this way.*" In other words, Paul wanted them to follow his example relying on the power of God's Spirit. He wanted them to walk according to God's Word. Paul wanted his crown (the church at Philippi) to sparkle and Jesus wants His church (His Bride) to honor Him.

PHILIPPIANS 4:4-5

IN THIS WAY PART 2

Philippians 4:4-5

“Rejoice in the Lord always; again I will say, rejoice! Let your gentle spirit be known to all men. The Lord is near.”

One thing that I have observed from studying the Bible and so appreciate, is that God does not tell us to do something without telling us how to do it. He also gives us examples that show us how to do it. That is what we find here in the book of Philippians.

Paul not only gave us instruction, by the leading of God’s Spirit, but Paul also revealed what motivated him:

- To *“press on towards the goal for the prize of the upward call of God in Christ Jesus”* (Philippians 3:14).
- To *“stand firm in the Lord”* (Philippians 4:1).
- And, *“to live in harmony in the Lord”* (Philippians 4:2).

His motivation was the realization that his citizenship was in heaven. Therefore, he lived his life in a way that reflected that citizenship by bringing honor to God. His motivation was the realization that Jesus could return at any moment. Therefore, he lived his life in a way that reflected that expectation. He did not want to be doing or saying anything that He would be ashamed of if Jesus returned at that moment. So Paul pressed on towards the goal of Christlikeness, standing firm in the Lord and living in harmony with other believers, just as he told the Philippian church to do and just as he has told us to do.

The motivation that caused Paul to press on towards the goal of Christlikeness, standing firm in the Lord and living in harmony with other believers, also caused him to do two more things. It caused him to *“rejoice in the Lord”* and it caused him to be *“gentle in spirit.”* Why? Because *“the Lord is near”* – the Lord was coming back at any moment.

REJOICE IN THE LORD

Paul said in **Philippians 4:4**, *“Rejoice in the Lord always; again I will say, rejoice!”* Sometimes I read Scripture and I say to myself, *“self, that is impossible.”* I read passages like **verse 4** and I wonder, how can I do that? How did Paul do that? The bar seems to be too high. I don’t think I can do what God wants me to do.

To make it even more intimidating, Paul puts **verse 4** as a command. That means we are to rejoice no matter what our day is like. Whether the day is dark or bright, difficult or easy, full of problems or clear sailing, we are to rejoice. As though that were not enough, in the Greek, **verse 4** is a present imperative calling all believers to the continual, habitual practice of rejoicing. How can we do that?

When we had client meetings in the corporate world our clients, on many occasions, would ask us to do what seemed to be the impossible. They always wanted us to jump through another hoop that was a little higher than the previous one. In those meetings I said, *“No problem, we can do that.”* When the client left the meeting my team would turn to me and say: *“Boss, how are we going to do that?”* They needed to be taught, they needed to be properly motivated and they needed tangible evidence that it could be done. They needed assurance from their leader that the goal was achievable. When I gave that assurance they continued to reach a higher level of professional excellence.

The same is true in our walk with the Lord. I was meeting with a pastor friend of mine, sharing with him some thoughts from the book of Philippians. He said to me, *“How did Paul do what he asked others to do? What enabled him to press on, stand firm, be in harmony with others, rejoice always and be gentle in spirit? After all, he was at a tremendous disadvantage being chained to a Roman shoulder twenty-four seven. How come we struggle doing what seemed so natural to Paul? What was his secret?”* You may not know that pastors sit around asking one another the same questions that their congregation has. Well, we do! If we are going to preach the Word of God, then we had better know how to properly apply the Word of God and live it as an example to our churches.

I am convinced that people want to hear truth, but they don’t want to just hear the truth, they want to see it modeled. They want to know that it is authentic and that it will benefit their daily lives. They want to know that it is attainable or they won’t pursue it. They will get frustrated and give up along the way. Paul was showing us that the goal of being more like Christ is attainable and here is what you do, here is how you do it, here is the right motivation to have, so you can do it – Paul said follow my example.

As my pastor friend and I pondered the life of Paul we concluded that he was very focused. When you read Philippians Chapter Three and Chapter Four you cannot but realize that Paul was all about Jesus and his focus was continually on Jesus, his citizenship in heaven and the return of Jesus at any moment. Therefore, Paul not only gave instruction in what to do, but also in how to do it and then gave himself as an example to follow.

Paul said, *“Rejoice in the Lord always.”* I have found that if I haven’t rejoiced lately, I have probably lost focus. I am probably not looking at life from God’s perspective, or I am not in fellowship with the Lord. Joy comes from knowing Christ and from having a vital daily growing relationship with Him, and from the fact that I know He is coming for me at any moment.

Joy is given to us through His Holy Spirit. Joy is one of the fruits of the Holy Spirit (**Galatians 5:22**). It is one of God's transferable attributes that enables us to be more like Christ. It is an attribute that God wants to manifest through us, so the world around us can see that Jesus is real and alive and working today in the lives of people.

Joy in the lives of Christians is one of the things that drew me to Christ at the age of twenty-seven. Back in those days I was good at putting on a front. If you were to talk with me, back in those days, you would have thought that I had it all together. I seemed happy. However, on the inside I was coming apart. I was empty. I was miserable and I did not want any one to know how miserable I really was.

When our neighbors invited us to their Bible study, I met a group of Christians that seemed to be full of joy. They claimed it was because they loved Jesus and had a personal relationship with Him. I thought they were putting me on. I thought they were putting on a front just like me. The only difference was they were better at it than I was. I thought if I spent enough time with them I would eventually see through their phony exterior. Instead, I discovered it was real. They had something I thought you lost when you entered adulthood. I wanted what they had.

People are trying to find joy. They try to buy it. They think that more things they have, like a new car, a new home, new clothes, etc., will bring them joy. All of those things only give us joy temporarily until the bill arrives. People try to achieve it. If they get that promotion, or make more money they will finally be happy. That works until they realize that along with the higher status come more responsibility and they have to work more hours. Some people think the more relaxation they get the more joy they will have. They think if they take that over due vacation it will bring them joy, only to find they need to go back to work to rest up. People try various experiences. They even invented the so-called "happy hour." People are looking for joy!

The people around us need to see joy in us. They need to see that it is real and attainable. They need to know where that joy comes from – from Jesus. The world around us is not attracted to Christians who look as though they are sucking on lemons.

Jesus did not go to the cross because of all the hurt and grief that He would bear and because He was going to be miserable the rest of His eternal life, but rather for the Joy that was set before Him (**Hebrews 12:2**). If we have put our faith in Jesus as our personal Savior and Lord, then we are in Christ and if we are in Christ, then we should ***"rejoice in the Lord."*** Why? Because He is! He is full of joy and He wants us to experience His joy.

Notice what we are told in **John 15**. In John Chapter Fifteen, Jesus talked about having an abiding relationship with Him. He talked about bearing fruit, so that the Father is glorified. He talked about the fact that without Him we can do nothing. Then, He said in **John 15:9-11**, ***"Just as the Father has loved Me, I have also loved you; abide in My love. If you keep My commandments, you will abide in My love; just as I have kept My Father's commandments and abide in His love. These things I have spoken to you so that My joy may be in you, and that your joy may be made full."*** Joy comes from having an abiding relationship with Jesus. Joy comes from enjoying Jesus. Joy comes from walking in obedience to the Word of God with Jesus. Joy comes from bearing fruit for Jesus. Jesus wants your joy to be made full. He also wants the world around you to see your joy for His glory.

REFLECT A GENTLE SPIRIT

There is something else that Jesus wants us to have. Something else that He wants the world around us to see for His glory. We see it in **Philippians 4:5** when Paul said, ***“Let your gentle spirit be known to all men.”*** The Greek word translated as ***“gentle spirit”*** (***“epieikēs”***) can also be translated as ***“gentleness.”*** The word can also be translated as ***“graciousness.”*** In short, the term refers to a Christlike consideration of others.

For many years I worked under the premise that said, *“You don’t get mad you get even.”* I have seen some Christians live by that premise. Maybe you heard about the fellow who was told by his physician, *“Yes indeed, you do have rabies.”* Upon hearing this, the patient immediately pulled out a pad and pencil and began to write. Thinking the man was making out his will, the doctor said, *“Listen, this doesn’t mean you’re going to die. There’s a cure for rabies.”* *“I know that,”* the man said. *“I’m making list of all the people I’m gonna bite.”*

Well, that is not what God asks us to do, but sometimes that is the kind of thing we do. We get even. The opposite of a ***“gentle spirit”*** is a harmful spirit that is not of the Lord. God wants us to ***“stand firm in the Lord”*** and ***“live in harmony in the Lord”*** and ***“rejoice in the Lord”*** and you can’t do those things if you don’t have a ***“gentle spirit”*** that is from the Lord -- a Christlike consideration of others.

When we ***“stand firm in the Lord”*** and ***“live in harmony in the Lord”*** and ***“rejoice in the Lord”*** and have a ***“gentle spirit”*** then we know that we are becoming more like Jesus. They are the very things that we are to do as we ***“press on toward the goal for the prize of the upward call of God in Christ Jesus.”*** And why do we do them? Because ***“The Lord is near.”***

REMEMBER THE LORD IS NEAR

Paul placed his instructions and exemplified those instructions (to stand firm, live in harmony, rejoice always and be gentle) between to bookends, if you will. Those two bookends include: Jesus is near (**Philippians 4:5**) and we eagerly wait for His return at any moment (**Philippians 3:20**). The key is to stay focused on Jesus. Stay focused on the fact that your citizenship is in heaven and your life should reflect that citizenship. Stay focused on the fact that Jesus is near and coming soon. Live ***“in this way”*** Paul said. We are to follow Paul’s example. Glorify Jesus today! ***“Rejoice in the Lord!”*** Let the world see your ***“gentle spirit.”*** After all, ***“The Lord is near.”***

CHAPTER THIRTY

PHILIPPIANS 4:6-7**GUARDING OUR HEART AND MIND****Philippians 4:6-7**

“Be anxious for nothing, but in everything by prayer and supplication with thanksgiving let your request be made known to God. And the peace of God, which surpasses all comprehension, will guard your hearts and your minds in Christ Jesus.”

Philippians 4:6-7 is a familiar passage to most Christians. In fact, it has become too familiar. Therefore, I want to look at this passage from a perspective that brings it closer to home. And perhaps rekindle our commitment to guard our hearts and minds the way God intended.

If you have sons or daughters you are aware of the worldly influences bidding for their hearts and minds today. Worldly influences are enticing them to indulge in *“the lust of the flesh and the lust of the eyes and the boastful pride of life”* as mentioned in **1 John 2:16**.

Our sons and daughters are being tempted to indulge in things that are sensual. They are being pressured to experience sex outside of marriage, drugs, alcohol, etc. If it feels good do it, if it gives you a rush do it, the more extreme the better are common expressions they hear from their peers. They are being enticed by a lust for the flesh. They are becoming increasingly more comfortable with the ungodly world around them.

Our sons and daughters are living in a world that is very visually oriented, which is influencing their behavior. They are becoming excessively concerned with how they and others look. The media is pushing them into an obsession with their physical appearance. Image is everything.

Our sons and daughters are being taught to boast in their achievements and accomplishments giving no credit to the One who endowed them with their abilities and talents to begin with. They are given role models that exalt themselves and then encouraged them to do the same. They are influenced to live life their way, not necessarily God’s way.

Our sons and daughters are being pressured to disobey God’s Word. They are being given seeds of doubt about the validity and authority of God’s Word. Their faith is being challenged and some are being tempted to deny or reject the only living and true God. Many are becoming complacent in their faith. Their minds are being polluted and their conscience dulled.

There are also influences in this world today that are causing our sons and daughters to worry, become anxious and stress out. They deal with more and bigger issues at a younger age than what we had to deal with when we were growing up. They have a greater possibility for less peace and more turmoil in their lives than at any time in recent history. They are not being taught how to cope with it.

Our sons and daughters are being tempted to conform to the thinking and actions of this world that are contrary to the thinking and actions of God. Many are not being taught to have a Biblical worldview. There are worldly forces after the hearts and minds of our sons and daughters. The media, college professors and political leaders are constantly in their face bombarding them with a new ideology. Having a Biblical world view is no longer mainstream. Worldly influences are taking their eyes off of Jesus and their thoughts away from the true worship of God.

The same is true for all of God's children – you and me, regardless of our age or years walking with the Lord. There are worldly influences bidding for our hearts and minds as well.

So, the question is: What are we doing about it? How can you and I guard our hearts and minds as well as our children's hearts and minds ***“against the schemes of the devil” (Ephesians 6:11)***, ***“against the world forces of this darkness” (Ephesians 6:12)*** and against ***“the flaming arrows of the evil one” (Ephesians 6:16)***. In **Ephesians 6:10-17** we are told to put on the full armor of God so we can withstand worldly attacks. Then, in **Ephesians 6:18** we are told ***“with all prayer and petition pray at all times.”*** In **Philippians 4:6-7** we are told, ***“Be anxious for nothing, but in everything by prayer and supplication with thanksgiving let your request be made known to God. And the peace of God, which surpasses all comprehension, will guard your hearts and your minds in Christ Jesus.”*** God tells us how to guard our hearts and minds against the pressures of life and worldly influences.

Are you anxious, worried, or concerned about your sons or daughters future? I am. Are you concerned about their relationship with the Savior? Are you purposely looking for ways to raise them to love Jesus? Are you actively involved in the process of guarding their hearts and minds? Are you teaching them the way to guard their own hearts and minds when you are not around? God tells us how to do it in **Philippians 4:6-7**.

FROM WORRY TO PRAYER

The first thing we are told to do is go from worry to prayer. Stop putting your energy into worries and start putting your energy into prayer. Paul said in **verse 6**, ***“Be anxious for nothing, but in everything by prayer and supplication with thanksgiving let your requests be made known to God.”*** This is the greatest need within the church today, within our families today and within the lives of our sons and daughters.

Dr. Curtis Mitchell in his book entitled “Praying Jesus Way” shared the findings of one of his seminary students. The student toured the United States and visited most of the mainline evangelical churches across the country to find a common thread that existed in all the churches, besides their main doctrinal beliefs. The common thread that he found was a consistent lack of fervent effectual prayer. The churches were not gathering together to pray.

Every one of us has those things within our lives that cause us to be anxious or to worry. Someone once said, ***“Worry is taking upon ourselves responsibility that God never intended for***

us to have.” If that is true and I believe it is, then we are to give our worries to God in prayer and trust Him to handle them in His sovereign timing and in accordance with His sovereign will. Nothing is so overwhelming that it will prevent God from taking upon Himself our anxiety. He is waiting for us to, once and for all, give them to Him and trust Him with them. In **1 Peter 5:7** we are told **“casting all your anxiety on Him, because He cares for you.”**

We are to worry about nothing and pray about everything. So many Christians look at **Philippians 4:6** and say, *“that’s impossible”* yet Paul put it in the form of a command. Therefore, it is possible. So many Christians take their worries to God in prayer and when they are finished praying, begin to worry about them again.

We are to turn our worries into prayer and if need be, into continual persistent prayer. Nothing is too difficult for God. Our biggest anxieties, worries and concerns are well within His power to resolve and well within His power to give us the grace needed to live with them or deal with them. In **Hebrews 4:16** we are told, **“Therefore let us draw near with confidence to the throne of grace, so that we may receive mercy and find grace to help in time of need.”**

Do you want victory over your anxiety worries and concerns? Well, here it is, **“Be anxious for nothing, but in everything by prayer and supplication with thanksgiving let your requests be made known to God.”** Prayer carries with it adoration for God that recognizes who He truly is in a respectful worshipful manner. Supplication is the earnest and the sincere desire of our heart to share our needs and problems with the One we love and adore. Thanksgiving is the expression of our faith in His answers to our requests that are not yet answered. We are to thank Him for His power, His promises, His mercy and His perfecting work within us and His loving care for us.

I taught the parenting seminar one summer. Before sharing, I asked my son Steve if I could share some of our family experiences with the class. Steve said dad, *“Above all else, teach them the value of prayer. Teach them to pray for their kids. Tell them to teach their kids to pray.”* Are you teaching your sons and daughters to take their anxiety, worries and concerns to the throne of grace? Are you teaching them to pray with thanksgiving? Are you teaching them to guard their hearts and minds through prayer?

FROM PRAYER TO PEACE

When we pray and I mean really pray, then **“the peace of God, which surpasses all comprehension, will guard your hearts and minds in Christ Jesus.”** The goal is not to eliminate every unpleasant circumstance from our lives, but rather to have God’s peace as we go through them. The goal is to have the peace that comes from having our hearts and minds stayed on Jesus. The goal is to have the Spirit of God, the Comforter, comfort our hearts and minds about anything and everything we face in life. The supernatural intervention of God guards our hearts and minds in Christ when we come to Him in prayer about everything with thanksgiving. God surrounds our hearts and minds with a mote of peace when we worry about nothing and pray about everything with thanksgiving.

CHAPTER THIRTY-ONE

PHILIPPIANS 4:8-9

THE GOD OF PEACE

Philippians 4:8-9

“Finally, brethren, whatever is true, whatever is honorable, whatever is right, whatever is pure, whatever is lovely, whatever is of good repute, if there is any excellence and if anything worthy of praise, dwell on these things. The things you have learned and received and heard and seen in me, practice these things, and the God of peace will be with you.”

In the previous verses, in Philippians 4:6-7, Paul told us how to have *“the peace of God.”* Now, in verses 8-9, he tells us how to have *“the God of peace.”* Through prayer with thanksgiving Paul told us in verses 6-7 that *“the peace of God...will guard your hearts and minds in Christ Jesus.”* Now, in verses 8-9, Paul tells us that by dwelling on wholesome thoughts, by doing the things that he did, then *“the God of peace”* will be with us.

Philippians 4:8-9, is the key that releases our anxieties and opens the door to the peace of God and the God of peace. Far too often Christians fail to implement the principles contained in these verses and then wonder why there is no peace in their lives. They wonder why their lives are filled with worries, anxieties and frustration. They wonder why they have little joy in their lives. Paul began this section of Scripture, in verse 4, by saying, *“Rejoice in the Lord always; again I say rejoice.”* Christians cannot rejoice in the Lord when their hearts and minds are filled with worries, anxieties and frustration. Give them to God in prayer. Christians cannot rejoice in the Lord when they refuse to constantly and consistently go to the throne of grace in prayer to find help in time of their need. Go to Him in Prayer. Christians cannot rejoice in the Lord if they lack the peace of God in their lives. Go to Him in prayer. Christians cannot rejoice in the Lord if they refuse to think and walk in such a way that allows them to experience the presence of the God of peace.

It is important for us to understand that we are the product of our thoughts. Proverbs 23:7 tells us, *“For as he thinks within himself, so is he.”* Jesus said in Mark 7:20-23, *“That which proceeds out of the man, that is what defiles the man. For from within, out of the heart of men, proceed the evil thoughts, fornication, thefts, murders, adulteries, deeds of coveting and*

wickedness, envy, slander, pride and foolishness. All these evil things proceed from within and defile the man.” Our thoughts are powerful. What we put into our mind affects our heart, which in turn determines what comes out in our words and actions. That is why Paul said over in **2 Corinthians 10:5**, *“we are taking every thought captive to the obedience of Christ.”* That is what we are to do as well. Someone once said:

*“Sow a thought, reap an action.
Sow an action, reap a habit.
Sow a habit, reap a character.
Sow a character, reap a destiny!”*

If we expect to act like Christians and fulfill our destiny as Christians, then we must think like Christians. We must think like people in which the Holy Spirit dwells. We must learn to dwell on thoughts that honor our God. We are to have our minds and lives transformed by dwelling or meditating on the things listed in **Philippians 4:8**.

DWELL ON THESE THINGS

The first thing Paul tells us, is to dwell on *“whatever is true”* (**verse 8**). The question then becomes: What is true? There are only four things mentioned in the Bible as truth. They are: God the Father (**Psalms 31:5**), God the Son (**John 14:6**), God the Holy Spirit (**John 16:13**) and the Word of God (**John 17:17**). If we are going to dwell on things that are true, then we must dwell upon the Word of God and the One who wrote it.

We need to stop dwelling on things that are not true. Christians spend too much time dwelling on things like false religions trying to show they are false and Christianity is true. We don’t need to be conversant with all the subtleties of falsehood to defend the truth. The best way to expose a crooked line is to put a straight edge alongside of it. The best way to expose a false teaching is to get to know the truth, the Word of God, and then hold the false teaching alongside the Word of God. Paul said dwell, or meditate, on whatever is true not on whatever is false.

The problem is, there is a growing number of Christians who no longer hold that the Bible is truth. They say it only contains truth. That position does not square with what Jesus said, nor with what the apostles said as they were inspired by the Holy Spirit to document the Word of God – that which is true.

Keep in mind, it is the Holy Spirit that desires to transform our thoughts by teaching us truth – it is the devil that desires to control our thoughts through lies, deception and falsehood. God is the Father of truth and the devil is the father of all lies (**John 8:44**). We are to dwell on things that are true, if we expect to experience the God of peace with us.

The second thing we are to dwell on is *“whatever is honorable”* (**verse 8**). Dwell on what is worthy of your respect and adoration. In **2 Corinthians 8:21** Paul said, *“For we have regard for what is honorable, not only in the sight of the Lord, but also in the sight of men.”*

One thing that really bothers me is when some tragedy happens to a family, like a child getting run over by a car, and the news media puts their microphone and cameras in the face of the grieving parents who can barely talk. To me, it is disrespectful to broadcast someone’s grief on

national television. It only appeals to man's lower nature. It's disgraceful. It desensitizes the conscience. I turn the channel. We are to cultivate thoughts that are honorable and respectful. So, be careful what you put into your mind.

The third thing we are to dwell on is ***“whatever is right”*** (**verse 8**). We can so easily dwell on the things in this world that are not right. They can consume us. The newspapers and news broadcasts are full of things that are not right.

When my wife and I worked together in Los Angeles we carpoled with another man. When it was my turn to drive, Kathy would sit in the front seat reading her Bible and our friend would sit in the back seat reading the newspaper. One day our friend started to fold up his newspaper when we were only about half way to the office. Kathy turned around and offered him her Bible and said, *“Now that you're finished reading the bad news, would you like to read the good news?”* If we are going to dwell on the things that are right, then we need to open up the Word of God and start there.

The fourth thing that we are to dwell on is ***“whatever is pure”*** (**verse 8**). We are to fix our thoughts on those things that are morally clean. We are to dwell on things that are wholesome, which is almost a lost concept today.

Our society is saturated with impurity today both in thoughts and deeds. I think we are rapidly approaching what it was like in the days of Noah, before God destroyed the world with a flood. In **Genesis 6:5-6** we are told, ***“Then the LORD saw that the wickedness of man was great on the earth, and that every intent of the thoughts of his heart was only evil continually. The LORD was sorry that He had made man on the earth, and He was grieved in His heart.”*** Today, when Christians stand up for what is morally pure according to God's holy standards, as written in God's holy Word, then we are looked upon as right-wing extremist. We are called Bible thumpers. Well, if that is what the world wants to call me, then praise God.

We are to stay away from things that breed impure thoughts. The question must be asked: How do we do that in a society that is saturated with impurity? The Psalmist addressed the same question in **Psalm 119:9-11**. He said, ***“How can a young man keep his way pure? By keeping it according to Your word. With all my heart I have sought You; do not let me wander from Your commandments. Your word I have treasured in my heart, that I may not sin against You.”*** If you are going to dwell on things that are pure, then I suggest that you turn off the television and open up the Word of God. Kids today are spending more time watching television than reading the Bible, memorizing scripture and attending church. No wonder the thoughts of our kids are dwelling on things that are impure.

We all need to set your eyes upon Jesus who is absolutely pure. We all need to ask ourselves: How Jesus would think and what He would watch or how He would act if He were here today? Walk in the same manner as He walked (**1 John 2:6**) and you will keep your way pure.

The fifth thing that we are to dwell on is ***“whatever is lovely”*** (**verse 8**). The Greek word for ***“lovely”*** can also be translated ***“pleasing.”*** We are to dwell on things that we know are pleasing and lovely to God. As we are told in **Isaiah 52:7**, ***“How lovely on the mountains are the feet of him who brings good news, who announces peace and brings good news of happiness, who announces salvation, and says to Zion, ‘Your God reigns!’”*** I cannot think of anything more lovely or pleasing, then to see or hear about someone that proclaims the good news about Jesus Christ, or of the one that stands up and proclaims ***“glory, glory hallelujah, my God reigns!”***

The sixth thing that we are to dwell on is *“whatever is of good repute”* (**verse 8**). We are to dwell on those things that are admirable. We are to dwell on good reports not bad reports. We are to dwell on those things that are highly regarded. We are to dwell on those things that build us up and bring encouragement into our lives.

The seventh thing that we are to dwell on is *“if there is any excellence”* or *“anything worthy of praise”* (**verse 8**). Quite frankly, no Christian can afford to waste time or mind power thinking about things that tear them down or others down. We are to actively look for things that are worthy of our praise.

PRACTICE THESE THINGS

Paul said in **verse 9**, *“The things you have learned and received and heard and seen in me, practice these things, and the God of peace will be with you.”* As James said in **James 1:22**, *“But prove yourselves doers of the word, and not merely hearers who delude themselves.”* We are to follow Paul’s example and then become examples ourselves.

Paul could look the church and individual Christians in the eyes and say with a clear conscience, *“Do as I do.”* Let me bring this closer to home. Can you look at your church family or your family at home and say with a clear conscience before God, *“The things you have learned and received and heard and seen in me, practice these things?”* Can you say to you church family or your family at home, *“Do as I do”* and know if they did it the Lord would be honored and glorified. If you are not that example, then you need to get on your knees before God and repent, then get up and follow Paul’s example. You owe that to your church, spouse and children.

Wrong prayer, wrong thinking, wrong action leads to anxiety, worry and frustrations, which sets the wrong example. Right prayer, right thinking, right actions leads to the peace of God and the assurance of having the God of peace with us, which sets the right example for others to follow.

Those whose hearts and minds are guarded through prayer will experience the peace of God. And those who practice right thinking that leads to right actions will have the God of peace with them and they will rejoice in the Lord.

PHILIPPIANS 4:10-13

THE SECRETE TO CONTENTMENT

Philippians 4:10-13

“But I rejoice in the Lord greatly, that now at last you have revived your concern for me; indeed, you were concerned before, but you lacked opportunity. Not that I speak from want, for I have learned to be content in whatever circumstances I am. I know how to get along with humble means, and I also know how to live in prosperity; in any and every circumstance I have learned the secrete of being filled and going hungry, both of having abundance and suffering need. I can do all things through Him who strengthens me.”

In **Philippians 4:10-13**, Paul reveals the secrete to the contentment, which God wants each of us to have. A contentment that takes us to a higher level in experiencing *“the peace of God.”*

We may not want to admit it, but we live in a society that thrives on discontentment. There is a multibillion dollar advertising industry that promotes discontentment. Car manufacturers, clothing designers, the food industry, the cosmetic industry, the housing industry, family fitness centers, etc., are all bidding for our business. Therefore, there is this constant pressure to convince us that we need more than what we have, or need to look better than we do. Then there is the influence that comes from politicians and college professors that says: We need change; what we have and what has worked for hundreds of years is not good enough any more. They say the system is broken. My dad used to say, *“If it aint broke, don't fix it.”* We need to ask ourselves: Is it broke or are they just promoting unnecessary discontentment. We need to Lord's wisdom and discernment today more than ever.

Discontentment is everywhere. People today are becoming infatuated with how they look. So much so that they are spending big bucks to get their bodies augmented.

- They are getting tummy tucks, nose jobs, face-lifts, and wrinkle removing injections, hair implants as well as various other types of implants.
- They want to look younger, bigger, flatter, smaller and more glamorous.

- They want to look like those Hollywood actors not realizing they have personal trainers and a team of people who help them put on their make-up and do their hair before going out in public.
- They want to look like the professional models not realizing they have their photos air brushed to remove their imperfections before they are placed on the cover of magazines for you to look at as you are waiting to check out at the grocery store.

People today want to change their appearance because they are not content with how they look.

Discontentment pops up from time to time in many areas of life. Sometimes without us realizing it. I remember when we almost bought a new home in Laguna Niguel, California. It was a beautiful home on a hill with a view of the ocean off in the distance. We loved the view. We put a deposit down on the home and were prepared to leave our church family, our friends and take our children out of school all because of an ocean view. We almost bought that home until the builder built a block wall around the property and eliminated the ocean view. We backed out of the deal.

That experience opened our eyes to the fact that the reason we were willing to move was not because we needed a new or a bigger home to satisfy our needs, or wanted to make a better investment, or move to a safer neighborhood. The reason we wanted to move was because we were discontentment with what the Lord had provided. There was nothing wrong with the home we had.

Sometimes we know that we are discontent and don't care. Occasionally I get what is called "*a new car fever*." I had this "*new car fever*" recently. You see, I had a leaky head gasket in my existing car and I was using that to rationalize the need to buy a new car rather than fix the one I had, which was paid for. I was rationalizing spending \$30,000 on a new car rather than spending \$2,500 on fixing my existing car.

If I was honest with myself, then I would need to admit that the real reason I had this "*new car fever*" was not because of a leaky head gasket, but rather because my existing car wouldn't do zero to sixty in less than six-seconds. I needed a faster car like I needed another hole in my head. I don't think people needed to see smoking the guy next to me when the stoplight turned green with tires smoking, peddle to the metal, engine redlining. I was being motivated by discontentment, which was promoted by television commercials.

When my kids started their new school year they had to buy a new wardrobe, not because their old clothes were worn out, but because they wanted the latest fall fashions. My guess is that most people don't buy the latest clothing styles, gadgets and toys because they need them. Please understand, there is a difference between needs and greed. Sometimes new clothes and gadgets are needed. The problem is: Our society seems to say; "*If you buy more things or newer things then you will be content.*" However, that is not what the Bible teaches. The Bible clearly teaches that we are to be content with what we have, with what the Lord has provided us. There are three aspects to being content that Paul addressed in **verses 10-13**.

GOD'S PROVIDENTIAL PROVISION

In **verse 10** Paul said, "***But I rejoice in the Lord greatly, that now at last you have revived your concern for me; indeed, you were concerned before, but you lacked opportunity.***" Paul was not rejoicing because they finally raised his salary, but rather because they finally revived their con-

cern for him. Now, he was not speaking from “*want*” as he clarified in **verse 11**. Paul rejoiced because they were being obedient to the providential leading of God through the Holy Spirit to use them to provide for Paul’s needs.

The term “*revived*” is a horticultural term that describes a plant that starts to grow again after lying dormant. In this passage it describes a spontaneous reaction to the Spirit of God by a church that was alive spiritually and growing spiritually enough to listen to the leading of God’s Spirit.

It had been about ten years since their last financial offering to Paul. I am sure Paul was concerned about the health of the Philippian church that supported him in Corinth, Thessalonica, Athens and Berea. Therefore, Paul rejoiced greatly that they revived their concern. He rejoiced greatly to discover that the reason they did not send an offering sooner was because they lacked opportunity. I am sure Epaphroditus clarified that when he delivered their financial gift.

Just as a side note. The free will giving of a church to missionaries and to other believes as well the free will giving of individuals to the churches general budget is an indicator of the spiritual health of the church as well as the spiritual health of individuals within the church. The church at Philippi had the concern, but they lacked opportunity. Some Christians today have the opportunity, but lack concern. Like Paul, most Pastors rejoice in the former not the later. We don’t rejoice when people give of their finances to the church out of duty, or because of our personal want or need. Most of us have learned to trust in God’s providential provision for our needs and for the needs of the church. Rather, we rejoice when people give freely and joyously to the Lord and to the ministries of the church. It is an indicator of the spiritual health of the church and the level of maturity of the believers in the church. It shows that Jesus Christ is Lord in every area of their lives since money is the last thing people relinquish to the lordship of Christ.

I think Paul had needs. I also think Paul took those needs to God in prayer. He was not anxious about his needs, but rather in prayer and supplication with thanksgiving he made his needs known to God, just as he taught us to do in **verse 6**. I think Paul trusted in the providential provision of the Almighty God while chained to a Roman soldier for two years. Paul had learned to be content with what God provided and when He provided it.

Most of our discontentment comes when we don’t think God has given us enough soon enough. God knows what we need and when we need it. The first aspect of being content is to by faith rely on the providential provision of God to care for all of our needs in response to our prayers expressing to Him those needs (**Matthew 6:25-34**).

GOD’S EXPERIENTIAL EDUCATION

In **verses 11-12** Paul said, *“Not that I speak from want, for I have learned to be content in whatever circumstances I am. I know how to get along with humble means, and I also know how to live in prosperity; in any and every circumstance I have learned the secrete of being filled and going hungry, both of having abundance and suffering need.”*

Paul said he “*learned to be content*” and he did not learn it in a classroom. Paul learned to be content by fully trusting in God while living through real life experiences. Paul was not some “ivory tower” theologian. He lived in the trenches and then ministered to others who were living in the trenches. He learned to be content by seeing the providential hand of God at work in his

normal everyday life, providing for his every need and accomplishing every good thing. Just as Paul said in **Philippians 2:13**, *“for it is God who is at work in you, both to will and to work for His good pleasure.”* Paul learned to be content with God’s sovereign will and plan for his life.

A very good friend of mine lost his wife to cancer just a few weeks before my wife went home to be with the Lord. This man was in vocational ministry at the time and had three teenage daughters living at home. One day he walked into my office, closed the door and began to weep. He cupped his head in his hands and sobbed like a baby. He was angry, he was scared, and he was hurting. He did not see how he could continue in ministry. He told me he did not like being a single dad and wanted to get married to someone, any one, as soon as possible. He had become totally discontent with every aspect of his life. We cried together, we prayed together and together determined to walk through the trenches of life together for God’s glory.

Out of that meeting came a ministry to widowers, which I was part of for a while. I see that man occasionally. He has done a great job in raising three godly young women and he is content with every aspect of his life. He learned to be content. He learned contentment through the experiences of life, which enabled him to minister to others in a way others could not. His ministry has expanded to a nationwide ministry that is being abundantly blessed by the Lord. That would not have happened if he had not learned to be content.

Are you learning contentment? Sometimes we become so discontent that we never truly learn contentment, so God must take us through more life experiences for us to learn contentment. Do you know why God does that? Do you know why contentment is important? The answer is wrapped up in Greek the word that Paul used for *“content.”* The word describes a person whose resources are from within. In the context of this passage, the resource that is within is the power of God’s Holy Spirit at work in our lives as a result of our faith in Christ as Savior and Lord.

God wants us to trust in Him and experience His indwelling power at work in real life experiences for His glory, so we reach a higher level of spiritual maturity and so God can use us more effectively to reach people for Christ, or to minister to people that others cannot. As we are told in **Romans 8:28**, *“And we know that God causes all things to work together for good to those who love God, to those who are called according to His purpose.”*

GOD’S SUSTAINING STRENGTH

Paul got to the core of contentment in **verse 13** when he said, *“I can do all things through Him who strengthens me.”* Walking with Jesus Christ by faith is the secret to contentment. Whatever He wants me to do, He will provide the strength by His indwelling Spirit to accomplish it, if I am content in whatever circumstance I find myself. Whatever He wants me to do without, He will provide the strength by His indwelling Spirit to accomplish it, if I am content in whatever circumstance I find myself. Paul learned how to draw on and to depend on the indwelling strength of Christ’s power. Paul learned to handle life’s ups and downs, not in his own strength, but in Christ’s strength. Paul learned contentment.

God wants us to experience His peace and His power working in our lives in a greater way, so that He is glorified. He wants people who do not know Him to see that Jesus is alive and working in the lives of His people as they walk in the trenches of life. For Him to accomplish that we must have a personal relationship with Him as our Savior and Lord and then we must

learn to be content in whatever circumstance we find ourselves in. We need to be content as a testimony to the world that we can do all things through Him who strengthens us. Christ in us, is the secrete to contentment.

CHAPTER THIRTY-THREE

PHILIPPIANS 4:14-17

GIVING PROFITS OUR ACCOUNT

Philippians 4:14-17

“Nevertheless, you have done well to share with me in my affliction. You yourselves also know, Philippians, that at the first preaching of the gospel, after I left Macedonia, no church shared with me in the matter of giving and receiving but you alone; for even in Thessalonica you sent a gift more than once for my needs. Not that I seek the gift itself, but I seek for the profit which increases to your account.”

In the process of Paul thanking the Philippian church for their very generous financial gift, he revealed how we can lay up treasures in heaven. He told us how we can add to our heavenly bank account. The process is threefold: First we become partners in the ministry, then we invest financially in the ministry and then we reap the profit.

In addition, Paul revealed the right perspective to have in giving financially to a missionary or church ministry. He revealed the right perspective a missionary, or church or individual in the church should have in receiving financial offerings for the ministry.

BECOME A PARTNER

Paul said in verse 14, *“Nevertheless, you have done well to share with me in my affliction.”* The phrase *“share with me”* is one word in the original Greek manuscript (*“sunkoinōneō”*), which is derived from two other Greek words; *“sun”* meaning *“together with”* and *“koinōneō”* meaning *“have a share of.”* The phrase conveys to us the idea of entering into partnership with someone. In other words, the Philippian church willingly out of obedience to the leading of God’s Holy Spirit entered into partnership with Paul.

As we have already seen, the Philippian church sent Epaphroditus to deliver their financial gift to Paul. They also sent Epaphroditus to help Paul in any way he could. I suspect it was more than going to the market place to buy Paul a bagel from time to time. As we have already seen, Epaphroditus was a fellow worker with Paul in preaching the gospel. The Philippian church gave

of their time and resources and as a result became partners with Paul in the ministry and particularly in the affliction that he was suffering as a result of that ministry.

The word “*affliction*” is also translated in the Bible as “*tribulation*,” “*anguish*,” “*persecution*,” “*distress*” and “*trouble*.” By giving financially to Paul and his ministry they not only expressed their support of Paul, but also their partnership with Paul in every respect. I believe this is very important for every one to grasp. We are not to give financially to missionaries or to the church, so that we can get a tax write-off. We are to give so that we become partners in the ministry and partners with the one who ministers. We are not to give financially to missionaries or to the church because some pastor makes us feel guilty if we don’t. We are to willingly, joyfully, consistently and sacrificially give because we are partners with Christ who is working through His church (through you and me) building the kingdom of God. The Lord wants us to support the ministries of His church with the right motives from the right perspective.

INVEST FINANCIALLY

We are to invest financially in the ministry of the church. That may mean making personal sacrifices. Paul said in verses 15-16, “*You yourselves also know, Philippians, that at the first preaching of the gospel, after I left Macedonia, no church shared with me in the matter of giving and receiving but you alone; for even in Thessalonica you sent a gift more than once for my needs.*”

Normally when Paul’s funds dried up he would make and sell tents for a living. He did that so he could eat, buy clothes, and continue to minister the Word of God, preach the gospel, plant churches and equip the saints for the work of ministry. However, while Paul was in Rome he was chained to a Roman soldier twenty-four hours a day seven days a week. At the time this letter was written he had been chained to various Roman soldiers for two years. Paul had no way of providing for his financial needs. He was under house arrest, which meant he had to pay for his own rented quarters and buy his own food without any means of earning the money to do so.

I am sure there were times when Paul went hungry. Paul made personal sacrifices for the sake of the church, the gospel, the Word and Christ. He made personal sacrifices because he was in partnership with Christ, ministering the Word of God and preaching the gospel (the good news about Jesus).

The Philippian church also made personal sacrifices. Notice what we are told in 2 Corinthians 8:1-5. “*Now, brethren, we wish to make known to you the grace of God which has been given in the churches of Macedonia (which included the church at Philippi), that in a great ordeal of affliction their abundance of joy and their deep poverty overflowed in the wealth of their liberality. For I testify that according to their ability, and beyond their ability, they gave of their own accord, begging us with much urging for the favor of participation in the support of the saints, and this, not as we had expected, but they first gave themselves to the Lord and to us by the will of God.*” The church at Philippi and the members of that church were in “*deep poverty*” yet they begged Paul to take their financial gift to support the church in Judea. They gave sacrificially to the Lord and His work. Why? Because they were partners with Christ and with Paul.

When the Philippian church gave financially to Paul in Thessalonica, they had to send someone to walk 100 miles to deliver their gift and they did that twice. When they gave financially to Paul in Corinth, they had to send someone to walk 250 miles to deliver their gift. When they gave financially to Paul in Rome, they had to send someone to travel 1400 miles to deliver the gift. They made sacrifices to support the Lord's work. They not only gave out of their poverty, but they also went the extra mile. Are you willing to make a personal sacrifice for the Lord's work that He is accomplishing through your church? Are you willing to go the extra mile for Jesus?

REAP THE PROFIT

Investing financially in the Lord's work through His church pays eternal dividends. Paul said in **verse 17**, ***“Not that I seek the gift itself, but I seek for the profit which increases to your account.”*** Paul was thankful for their financial gift, but he was more grateful for what they would receive in return as a result of them giving financially to the Lord's work. They were laying up treasures in heaven. They were doing the very thing that Jesus instructed all of us to do. **In Matthew 6:19-21** Jesus said, ***“Do not store up for yourself treasures on earth, where moth and rust destroy, and where thieves break in and steal. But store up for yourselves treasures in heaven, where neither moth nor rust destroys, and where thieves do not break in or steal; for where your treasure is, there your heart will be also.”***

The Biblical principle is giving and receiving. Paul revealed that in **Philippians 4:15**. You give and you receive back! You invest in God's work and you get back a profit that is deposited into your heavenly bank account. You give and receive back, so you can give more. You cannot out-give God. Whatever you give God He takes and multiplies for His work, for His glory and for your benefit. **Proverbs 11:25** says, ***“The generous man will be prospered, and he who waters will himself be watered.”***

Notice what Jesus said in **Luke 6:38**. He said, ***“Give and it will be given to you. They will pour into your lap a good measure – pressed down, shaken together, and running over. For by your standard of measure it will be measures to you in return.”*** Some people don't have much because they don't give much to the Lord's work through His church.

In **2 Corinthians 9:6** we are told, ***“...he who sows sparingly will also reap sparingly, and he who sows bountifully will also reap bountifully.”*** Just remember that you don't reap a harvest if you don't plant the seed.

Paul, as did Jesus, wanted Christians to be focused on their heavenly bank account rather than on their earthly bank account. We should be more concerned about the dividends we receive by investing in Christ's work than in the dividends we receive by investing in the stock market.

A preacher once said, ***“If you want treasures in heaven, you'd better give some money to someone who's going there!”*** Well, the church is going there. The Bride of Christ is going there. Are you a financial partner with the Lord and His work? Are you giving sacrificially to the Lord and His work? Are you laying up treasures in heaven by giving to the Lord's work? Giving to the Lord's work results in a ***“profit which increases to your account.”*** I want everyone to have a large heavenly bank account. I want your treasure in heaven to overflow. Just remember, it starts down here by investing in the Lord's work.

CHAPTER THIRTY-FOUR

PHILIPPIANS 4:18-19**WHEN GOD SUPPLIES OUR NEEDS****Philippians 4:18-19**

“But I have received everything in full and have an abundance; I am amply supplied, having received from Epaphroditus what you have sent, a fragrant aroma, an acceptable sacrifice, well-pleasing to God. And my God will supply all your needs according to His riches in glory in Christ Jesus.”

The apostle Paul made a very bold statement in **Philippians 4:19**. He made a bold promise to the church at Philippi. It is a promise that each one of us can claim, if we follow the same Biblical principle that the Philippian church followed.

God has documented several principles in His Word and has set them in motion by His power. One of those Biblical principles is illustrated in Philippians Chapter Four starting with **verse 10** and concluding with **verse 19**. Because of this Biblical principle, Paul could boldly say, in **verse 19**, *“And my God will supply all your needs according to His riches in glory in Christ Jesus.”* That statement is based on a Biblical principle documented in **Galatians 6:7**, which says, *“Do not be deceived, God is not mocked; for whatever a man sows, this he will also reap.”* This Biblical principle has been in effect from the beginning of creation. It can be seen at work in creation, in the church and in our individual lives. For example:

- If we sow apple seeds we will reap apples.
- If we sow Sequoia seeds we will reap a forest of Sequoia trees.
- If we sow flower seeds we will reap flowers.
- If we sow kindness we will reap kindness.
- If we sow gentleness we will reap gentleness.
- If we sow mercy we will reap mercy.
- If we sow grace we will reap grace.
- If we sow love we will reap love.
- If we sow forgiveness we will reap forgiveness.
- If we sow holiness we will reap holiness.

- If we sow discord we will reap discord.
- If we sow sparingly we will reap sparingly.

“Whatever a man sow, this he will also reap.”

I have seen people sow corruption in their business dealings, and reap the results of that corruption. That became very vivid one day when I was in the corporate world. The corporation that I worked for had just decided to pursue a new business opportunity. A work order number was opened so I could properly charge my time and so we could monitor the cost of pursuing this new business venture. The only people that had access to the work order number was my boss and myself. It was highly confidential; at least that is what we thought.

One day my boss received a copy of a \$8,000 telephone bill for all the calls made against that work order number in one month. He asked me what I was doing. I told him I did not make any of those calls. An investigation was conducted. We discovered that one of my employees was running his own business on our company’s time, and in the process he had racked up an \$8,000 phone bill using our work order number. We also discovered he was forging his supervisor’s signature on his time card. He was charging us for his time while he was running his own personal business. I can assure you he reaped the consequences for his actions.

I know people who have sown sinful behavior and reaped the consequences of that behavior. I am sure you know people like that yourself. Don’t think you can mock God and get away with it. **Galatians 6:8** says, ***“For the one who sows to his own flesh will from the flesh reap corruption, but the one who sows to the Spirit will from the Spirit reap eternal life.”*** Whatever you sow that is what you are going to reap. It is a Biblical principle by which God works.

WE SOW ACCORDING TO OUR RICHES

Having said that let’s come back to the passage before us in Philippians, and see how the principle of sowing and reaping applies to the Philippian church as well as to our own lives and to our own churches.

The Philippian church was not a financially rich church. The churches in Macedonia, which included the Philippian church, were going through ***“a great ordeal of affliction”*** and were in ***“deep poverty”*** according to **2 Corinthians 8:1-2**. Yet they took care of their own church and then out of that poverty begged Paul ***“for the favor of participation in the support of the saints”*** in Judea (**2 Corinthians 8:3-5**). Not only did they take care of their own church and help support other churches, but they also gave an abundant financial contribution to support Paul – their adopted missionary. Not only did they support Paul financially, but they also sent one of the members of their congregation to deliver their offering and then to physically help Paul in the ministry (**Philippians 1:25-30**).

Paul said in **Philippians 4:18**, ***“But I have received everything in full and have an abundance; I am amply supplied, having received from Epaphroditus what you have sent, a fragrant aroma, an acceptable sacrifice, well-pleasing to God.”*** Their financial gift to Paul was the overflow of their grateful hearts for Paul. Their financial gift to Paul was the result of their desire to be in partnership with Paul and with Christ in the building up of the church and the kingdom of God. Their financial gift to Paul was a sacrificial act of worship to God. Paul said their finan-

cial gift was like a fragrant aroma, an acceptable sacrifice that was well pleasing to God. I don't know about you, but I want my giving to be well pleasing to God.

The Philippian church took care of their own needs and then took care of the needs of others through their sacrificial gifts of their time and financial resources. That is why Paul could boldly proclaim, in **verse 19**, that their own needs as a church would be supplied by God ***“according to His riches in glory in Christ Jesus.”*** Paul understood the Biblical principle. The Philippian church would reap what they sowed. They took care of Paul's needs and God would take care of their needs.

WE REAP ACCORDING TO GOD'S RICHES

When God's work is done His way, then He will provide all the resources needed to accomplish that work. We need to understand the Biblical principle of sowing and reaping and God's role in it. When we sow generously doing God's work, we will reap God's generosity for the work. I think Paul understood that he and the Philippian church were doing God's work, God's way and they would not lack God's supply. I think Paul understood there was no limit to God's resources in providing for their needs. He told the Philippian church that God would supply all their needs according to ***“His riches.”***

The Philippian church gave out of their poverty, but God would give to them out of His riches. After all, God tells us in **Haggai 2:8**, ***“The silver is Mine, and the gold is Mine, declares the LORD of hosts.”*** In **Psalm 50:10-12** He says, ***“For every beast of the forest is Mine, the cattle on a thousand hills...everything that moves in the field is Mine...the world is Mine and all it contains.”*** The Philippian church would reap what they sowed according to God's riches in glory in Christ Jesus. So will we, if we sow generously in doing God's work God's way for God's glory.

God does not lack in resources. What He lacks are the people through whom He can pour those resources to build up the church and His kingdom. God is looking for people like the Philippians who don't have sticky hands keeping and spend more on themselves than they should. God has provided most of us with an abundance to take care of our personal needs and the needs of our family. The rest is for building up the church and His eternal kingdom in glory. God is looking for people like the Philippians who are kingdom focused through whom He can pour His resources. He is looking for people like the Philippian who will take those resources and provide for their needs, not their greeds, and use the rest to lay up treasures in heaven. He wants each of us to be good stewards of the financial resources that He has given to us for His glory and for His kingdom.

Keep in mind that we reap financially what we sow financially. In **2 Corinthians 9:6** we are told, ***“...”he who sows sparingly will also reap sparingly, and he who sows bountifully will also reap bountifully.”*** In **Luke 6:38** Jesus said, ***“Give, and it will be given to you. They will pour into your lap a good measure – pressed down, shaken together, and running over. For by your standard of measure it will be measured to you in return.”*** In other words, we reap what we sow.

Paul could boldly say to the Philippians and the Philippian church that God would supply all their needs. The Philippians took care of their own church and then took care of the needs of

Paul. They gave sacrificially and they gave generously. Paul knew that according to the very Word of God they would reap what they sowed. So it will be with each of us, as we provide for the needs of the church. So it will be with the church, as the church provides for the needs of its missionaries. We, as will the church reap what we sow.

CHAPTER THIRTY-FIVE

PHILIPPIANS 4:20-23

TO GOD BE THE GLORY FOREVER

Philippians 4:20-23

“Now to our God and Father be glory forever and ever. Amen. Greet every saint in Christ Jesus. The brethren who are with me greet you. All the saints greet you, but especially those who are of Caesar’s household. The grace of the Lord Jesus Christ be with you all. Amen.”
(NKJV)

As Paul concluded his epistle to the church at Philippi he revealed his ultimate goal in life and in ministry. It is to be our ultimate goal in life and ministry as well. Before we look at Paul’s ultimate goal, which was to glorify God, let’s look at the greetings that were given to the church at Philippi.

GREETINGS

Paul greeted *“every saint in Christ Jesus”* (Philippians 4:21). Paul came full circle. He began his letter by greeting *“all the saints in Christ Jesus who are in Philippi”* (Philippians 1:1). Now, he concludes his letter the same way. As I mentioned at the beginning of our study the Greek word for saint is *“hagios,”* which means *“set apart ones”* or *“separated ones.”* The word can also be translated as *“sanctified ones”* or *“holy ones.”* Paul used the term *“saint”* forty times in his New Testament epistles referring to all believers. We see that very clearly in 1 Corinthians 1:2, which says, *“To the church of God which is at Corinth, to those who have been sanctified in Christ Jesus, saints by calling, with all who in every place call on the name of our Lord Jesus Christ.”* Every person who has come to faith in Jesus Christ is a saint.

A saint is someone who has been separated from sin and set apart to God for His holy purposes. Paul greeted *“every saint in Christ Jesus.”* *“In Christ”* is the key to sainthood. It is the spiritual sphere in which sainthood is a reality. Saints are *“in Christ Jesus.”* At the very moment that we trust Jesus as our personal Savior and Lord we become saints united with Christ.

Paul was not the only one who greeted the saints in Christ at Philippi. Paul said, *“The brethren who are with me greet you.”* We do not know for certain who all those people were. We know that one was Epaphroditus, because he was going to deliver Paul’s letter when he returned to the church at Philippi. We know that it included Timothy, who Paul mentioned in **Philippians 1:1**. However, what is even more significant is the fact that Paul said in **Philippians 4:22**, *“All the saints greet you, but especially those who are of Caesar’s household.”* (NKJV)

The mentioning of the believers within Caesar’s household was significant and of special interest to the Philippians. The city of Philippi was a Roman colony. The church at Philippi was made up of Roman citizens. They were under Caesar’s governing authority. They would have rejoiced to hear that some of Caesar’s family, employees, military leaders and perhaps members of the renowned Praetorian Guard had put their faith in Jesus Christ as Savior and Lord. That information was huge. I am sure they knew that if Caesar put Paul to death for his faith that those within Caesar’s household could face the same fate. I am sure they rejoiced in hearing that they were believers and I am sure their prayer list was expanded to include those saints within Caesar’s household.

I don’t know about you, but I get excited when a president or some member of their family or some prominent politician lets it be known that he or she is a born again Christian. I get excited when that person does not compromise God’s standards for morality or God’s ordained marriage between a man and a woman, and when they defend the life of an unborn child. I get excited when that person does not compromise their walk with Jesus Christ even though they are under enormous political pressure to do so. Those people will get my vote every time even if they are not very popular. I am sure it was not very popular to be a Christian in Caesar’s household either.

I am sure when Paul mentioned all these saints who greeted the Philippian church they were encouraged and rejoiced all the more. It brought glory to God when Paul shared what God was doing in Rome. Glorifying God was Paul’s ultimate goal in life and in ministry.

Paul also gave all the glory to God for what God was doing within the church at Philippi. Paul gave glory to God because:

- The church at Philippi, which Paul started, was a participant *“in the gospel from the first day until now”* (**Philippians 1:5**).
- The Church at Philippi had *“been filled with the fruit of righteousness which comes through Jesus Christ, to the glory and praise of God”* (**Philippians 1:11**).
- The church at Philippi had bowed their knees to the authority of Jesus Christ and His Word, not Caesar’s. They recognized that Jesus was *“highly exalted”* and was given a *“name which is above every name”* and that some day at the very mention of the *“name of Jesus every knee will bow...and that every tongue will confess that Jesus Christ is Lord, to the glory of God the Father”* (**Philippians 2:9-11**).
- The Philippian church along with Paul were among the true believers *“who worship in the Spirit of God and glory in Christ Jesus”* (**Philippians 3:3**).
- The Philippian church along with Paul had their *“citizenship in heaven”* and Jesus Christ would one day *“transform”* the body of their *“humble state into conformity with the body of His glory”* (**Philippians 3:20-21**).
- He knew that God was going to *“supply all the needs”* of the Philippian church *“according to His riches in glory in Christ Jesus”* (**Philippians 4:19**).

Paul was praising God. He was giving God all the honor and glory for what He had accomplished and for what He was still accomplishing in and through the Philippian church.

GLORY

Paul said in **Philippians 4:20**, *“Now to our God and Father be the glory forever and ever. Amen.”* Notice that Paul said, *“Our God.”* He was emphasizing the personal relationship that the Philippians and we have with God in Christ. He was showing us that saints are not people to be worshiped, but rather people who worship the only true and living God. He was showing us that saints are not people who are to be glorified, but rather the people who glorify God. It is God and God alone who deserves all the *“glory forever and every. Amen.”*

Notice that Paul also referred to God as *“our...Father”* which indicates that the Philippian church and all believers are part of God’s eternal family because of our faith in Jesus Christ as Savior and Lord. We are given a new citizenship in His eternal kingdom and adopted into His eternal family as His children. As a result of Christ’s redemptive work upon the cross and our acceptance and faith in Christ as our Redeemer, we have our sins forgiven and are given eternal life with Him. That ought to cause all of us to join Paul in saying, *“to our God and Father be the glory forever and ever. Amen”*

When we truly understand who God is and what He has done for you and me, then we will give Him all the glory. This was Paul’s ultimate goal in life and in ministry, and it is to be our goal in life and in ministry as well.

Notice how and why Paul and others gave God all the glory as it is recorded in other passages of Scripture:

- In **Romans 11:33-36**, Paul gave God all the glory when he considered God’s greatness. Paul said, *“Oh, the depth of the riches both of the wisdom and knowledge of God! How unsearchable are His judgements and unfathomable His ways! For who has known the mind of the Lord, or who became His counselor? Or who has first given to Him that it might be paid back to him again? For from Him and through Him and to Him are all things. To Him be the glory forever. Amen.”*
- In **Romans 16:25-27**, Paul gave glory to God when he considered the impact of the gospel. Paul said, *“Now to Him who is able to establish you according to my gospel and the preaching of Jesus Christ, according to the revelation of the mystery which has been kept secrete for long ages past, but now is manifested, and by the Scriptures of the prophets, according to the commandment of the eternal God, has been made known to all the nations, leading to obedience of faith; to the only wise God, through Jesus Christ, be the glory forever. Amen.”*
- In **Ephesians 3:20-21**, Paul gave glory to God when he considered God’s work in our lives. Paul said, *“Now to Him who is able to do far more abundantly beyond all that we ask or think, according to the power that works within us, to Him be the glory in the church and in Christ Jesus to all generations forever and ever. Amen.”*
- In **1 Timothy 1:16-17**, Paul gave glory to God when he considered God’s mercy. Paul said, *“Yet for this reason I found mercy, so that in me as the foremost, Jesus Christ*

might demonstrate His perfect patience as an example for those who would believe in Him for eternal life. Now to the King eternal, immortal, invisible, the only God, be honor and glory forever and ever. Amen.”

- In **2 Timothy 4:18**, Paul gave glory to God when he considered his eternal security. Paul said, *“The Lord will rescue me from every evil deed, and will bring me safely to His heavenly kingdom; to Him be the glory forever and ever. Amen.”*
- In **Jude 24-25**, Jude gave glory to God when he considered God’s sustaining power. Jude said, *“Now to Him who is able to keep you from stumbling, and to make you stand in the presence of His glory blameless with great joy, to the only God our Savior, through Jesus Christ our Lord, be glory, majesty, dominion and authority, before all time and now and forever. Amen.”*
- In **Revelation 5:11-14**, John said, *“Then I looked, and I heard the voices of many angels around the throne and the living creatures and the elders; and the number of them was myriads of myriads, and thousands of thousands, saying with a loud voice, ‘Worthy is the Lamb that was slain to receive power and riches and wisdom and might and honor and glory and blessing.’ And every created thing which is in heaven and on the earth and under the earth and on the sea, and all things in them, I heard saying, ‘To Him who sits on the throne, and to the Lamb, be blessing and honor and glory and dominion forever and ever.’ And the four living creatures kept saying, ‘Amen.’ And the elders fell down and worshiped.”*

GRACE

There is not a greater accomplishment in life, then to have our lives and our ministries glorify God. Paul said in **Philippians 3:17**, *“Brethren, join in following my example, and observe those who walk according to the pattern you have in us.”* We are to follow Paul’s example and glorify our God and Father.

I cannot think of a better way to end our journey through the book of Philippians then to say as Paul said, *“Now to our God and Father be glory forever and ever. Amen” (verse 20). “The grace of the Lord Jesus Christ be with you all. Amen.”* (NKJV)

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