



A Book Study

Compilation of Notes

Grace Baptist Church

2010

Philippians

Paul wrote the letter to the Philippians during his first imprisonment in Rome, around AD 62.

Philippi was a small Roman colony located on the Egnatian Way, which was named in honor of Philip II of Macedon, the father of Alexander the Great. It was at Philippi that the Roman Empire forces of Brutus and Cassius met and fought the forces of Antony and Octavian (later known as Caesar Augustus) in 42 B.C. It was due to this battle at Philippi that created the uniqueness that was Philippi, which was that it recognized as a Roman colony meaning that those who lived there were given the privileges of Roman citizenship.

Philippi was primarily a Roman military outpost populated by colonists who were forced to live there by Roman rule. Many of these colonists were Roman Legionnaires, but there were other peoples from around the Roman Empire who were forced to live there as well. The colonists who lived there were given special privileges, such as no taxation and private ownership of land, and enjoyed the full rights of Roman citizenship. Philippi was recognized as a Roman city with all the rights and privileges of a sovereign city in Italy; this right was known as the "Italic right."

The church of Philippi was founded by Paul on his first missionary journey in A.D. 50. It had a very small Jewish population because there was no synagogue in Philippi; a synagogue required 10 Jewish men who were the head of a family household. It was in Philippi that Lydia and the Philippian jailer were early converts to the church through the ministry of Paul. The church grew under Paul's leadership. After Paul had left Philippi, the church of Philippi had responded to Paul's needs on various occasions to help him as he ministered to others in different locations.

The church of Philippi had just sent Epaphroditus to Rome with a gift for Paul as he was a prisoner in Rome without means of supporting himself. Paul responded to that gift by writing a letter to the Philippian church expressing his thanksgiving for the gift. The general theme of the letter to the Philippians is "encouragement in living the joyful Christian life." Yet Paul does address some issues regarding a believer's conduct in his letter. The tone of the letter is one of joyfulness and thanksgiving.

The structure of Philippians is chiastic:

- A Salutation: "Grace be unto you" (1:1-2)
- B Paul's concern for the Philippians (1:3-26)
 - C Exhortation: Example of Christ (1:27—2:18) (Paul's key message)
 - D Example of Timothy (2:19-24) (support of C)
 - D' Example of Epaphras (2:25-30) (support of C)
 - C' Exhortation: Example of Paul – Walking Steadfastly (3:1—4:9) (Support of C)
- B' The Philippians' concern for Paul (4:10-20)
- A' Salutation: "Grace be with you" (4:21-23)

Philippians 1:1-2 (Salutation). Paul introduces himself by using his Greek name, Paul, versus using his Hebrew name, Saul. This denotes Paul's being an apostle to the Gentiles, as he was writing to a church primarily made up of believing Gentiles. Paul also introduces Timothy, as Timothy was with Paul at the time he wrote the letter to the Philippians.

Paul referred to Timothy and himself as "slaves of Christ Jesus", because of their commitment to doing what God had called them to go – share the gospel message with the Gentiles. Paul referred to the believers at Philippi as "saints"; meaning "those set apart" in Christ. Paul also recognized the bishops (elders / overseers) and deacons of the church of Philippi in his introduction. The common bond that that was shared by all was Grace Baptist Church – Adult Bible Study

being “in Christ.” Paul also specifically addresses the elders / overseers / bishops (Gr. *episkopois*) and deacons (I Tim. 3: 1-7; Titus 1:5-9) of the Philippian church, which is unique to this epistle. It is thought that they received special mention because Epaphroditus had come to Paul with money from the Philippian church (2:25), and/or because friction existed within the church (4:2-3). By Paul referring to Timothy and himself as “slaves of Jesus Christ” while also addressing the ‘elders and deacons’ clearly demonstrates that no one is above another – and that they were all to minister and serve others.

Paul closes his greeting with two words – grace and peace. The order of these two words are important as “grace” refers to God's unmerited favor and divine enablement and “peace” is the cessation of hostilities and the inner tranquility that are the result of God's grace. Both “grace and peace” find their source in God the Father and the Lord Jesus Christ; and it was Paul’s desire that God would bestow these gifts on the Philippians even more than He had so far.

Paul’s Concern for the Philippians – 1:3-26 (Prologue)

Philippians 1:3-8 (Paul’s Thanksgiving for the Philippians).

1:3 - It had been about 10 years since Paul had first arrived in Philippi, but Paul tells the Philippians that he thanked God for them every time he thought of them. This was often because Paul had been helped by the Philippian church on at least 2 other occasions prior to his imprisonment in Rome. This was a commendation to the Philippian church for their ministry to him.

1:4-5 - Paul continues by telling them that he prays for them, making *requests* (Gr. *deesis*) to God for them. Paul’s prayers were full of joy as he petitioned God for them. This was a real, emotional point for Paul because of their *partnership/fellowship* (Gr. *koinonia*) with him in sharing the gospel message with others. The ‘fellowship’ in view means sharing together with mutual activity and mutual benefit in a close bond. This ‘fellowship’ includes partnership with God and with other believers in the work of getting the gospel to people. They had partnered with one another from the first day even until now, the day he was writing the letter.

1:6 - Paul was confident that God, the One who had started the good work of salvation in their lives, would continue that good work until it was completed. God has revealed in the N.T. that salvation is a process. It involves justification, when a sinner trusts Jesus Christ as his or her Savior (deliverance from penalty of sin). It also includes progressive sanctification that occurs continuously from the time of justification until the Christian's death or the Rapture. And it culminates in glorification, when the redeemed sinner finally sees Jesus Christ and experiences transformation into His image (deliverance from the presence of sin). Sanctification is in view here. Genuine spiritual growth and development in a believers live is based on what God has done, is doing, and will do. God will be faithful in His good work in the believer until the day of Christ; which is the day the believer is resurrected and united with Christ.

1:7 - Paul tells the Philippians, “it is right for me to think this of you; because they were partners with him in sharing the gospel. Paul expresses his feelings for the Philippians when he writes “since I have you in my heart (Gr. *kardia* – meaning intellect, emotion and will). This phrase can also be translated “since you have me in your heart”. The word “heart” means the center of a person’s thoughts, emotions and will. Paul had strong feelings of affection and love for the Philippian believers – just as the Philippian believer’s had strong feelings of affection and love for Paul.

Paul knew that his friends and partners in Philippi stood with him and supported him while he was in prison... and while he was defending his faith and gospel ministry to all, Jews and Gentiles. Paul stated that they were partners with him in his defense of faith and the gospel. “Defense and confirmation” are legal terms (Gr. Grace Baptist Church – Adult Bible Study

apologia – referring to legal defense and *bebaisios* – meaning to guarantee security), which Paul may have used to refer to the first phase of his trial in Rome to defend his gospel ministry or in a general sense to his continual defense of the faith. "Partakers with me" is a translation of the Greek word '*sugkoinonous*' that means "fellow partners." Paul and the Philippians partook together of the enabling grace that God provides for those who advance and defend the gospel (cf. 1:29-30; 3:1; 4:4).

1:8 - Paul then describes, with God as his witness, his feelings toward the Philippians. Paul's affection toward the Philippians was a compassionate love; a love that involved such an intense emotion that he felt this love with his entire being. Paul's affection for the Philippians was similar to Christ's love for us. Paul's intense, compassionate love for the Philippians caused him to "long" to be with them. It was this intense love that Paul makes known to them.

Philippians 1:9-11 (Paul's Prayer for the Philippians).

1:9 – Paul opens verse 9 with the statement - "And this I pray", by which Paul points to the importance of prayer. It was his prayer that the Philippian's love (Gr. *agape* – self-sacrificing love) for other believers would abound; Paul's prayer request to God was that the love the Philippians had for God, Paul and others would abound, meaning to overflow like a cup that is filled-to-overflowing. This overflowing, self-sacrificing love was something more than sentimental thoughts and feelings; it is a love that was genuine because it was based upon the knowledge of the truth of the Word of God. This overflowing love is anchored and regulated by the Word of God, and the application of one's knowledge of the Word of God provides depth of insight into life, which results in discernment. Righteous discernment comes from the application of Biblical knowledge and understanding; and it scrutinizes and distinguishes between right and wrong.

1:10 - Paul indicated that there were two purposes for his prayer for them. The first was for them is a "immediate near" purpose - to discern what is best and what is truly important. The Greek word "*dokimazo*" is translated as 'approve / discern' and it means "to test for the purpose of approving, to determine the genuineness of, and to meet the set standard". This same word was used in Paul's day to define the testing of metal and/or coins to determine the genuineness and quality of the metal and/or coin. The Greek word "*diaphero*" translated as "excellent" means "to differ"; which implies that the testing should determine if the metal or coin met specified standards. Most believers face choices between things of greater and lesser value – and the things a believer chooses are the things they love most. Paul's prayer was for the Philippians to possess an overflowing love (v.9) that would enable them to discern the things of greatest value and importance for their spiritual life.

The second purpose of Paul's prayer for the Philippians is an "ongoing future" purpose – to be pure and blameless until the day of Christ – the day of His return. The Greek word '*eilikrineis*' comes from the words for "sun" and "to judge" meaning "tested by sunlight" and is translated as "pure / sincere." The usage of this word in Paul's day came from pottery being sold - when it was sold as being "sun tested – without wax". Discernment was required in that day when buying pottery because some dishonest pottery makers would fill the cracks in their pottery with wax before it was glazed and/or painted. The buyer of pottery would test to see if the pottery was without cracks by holding the pottery up to the sun, because the sun would reveal the cracks through the glazing or paint. Therefore "sun tested" meant the pottery was "pure / sincere," with no cracks. The Greek word "*aproskopos*" translated "without offense / blameless" means "to be blameless, not causing someone to stumble, not offending." Paul's desire was for the Philippian believer to be loving, genuine, without blame and morally pure so they would not cause other another brother to stumble until the day of Christ's return.

1:11 - Paul continues his prayer for the believers in Philippi that they would be filled with the fruit righteousness produces. The only way a believer will be able to stand before God "pure and blameless" (v.10) is if we allow the Holy Spirit to control us. If we do, He will fill our lives with "the fruit" that is the product of His "righteousness" (Gal. 5:22-23). This righteousness and its fruit come to us "through Jesus Christ," not as a result of our own good deeds. Therefore, all "the glory and praise" for our righteousness, our fruit, and hopefully our flawless and blameless condition at the judgment seat of Christ, goes to "God." He is the ultimate Source of it all (cf. Eph. 1:6, 12, 14). It is Christ's life being lived out in the life of the believer that glorifies God.....and it is to the glory and praise of God.

Philippians 1:12-18 (Paul's Imprisonment Report).

1:12 - Paul wrote that he wanted the Philippian believers to know that his imprisonment and current state was actually advancing the spreading of the gospel of Christ. It was important to Paul that the believers in Philippi understand that there are no unfortunate accidents or circumstances with God. Paul wrote this in an apparent response to the belief by some that his imprisonment had created an obstacle to the spreading and advancement of the gospel message. In fact it was just the opposite; Paul's imprisonment was actually advancing the gospel because it had created new opportunities to share the gospel with new contacts.

1:13 - Paul's imprisonment had advanced the spreading of the gospel message to and through the Roman soldiers who were guarding him. The reality was that his imprisonment ('chains in Christ') was doing more to advance the gospel than if he had not been imprisoned. Paul went on to say that the people who were guarding him were recognizing that he was imprisoned because of his preaching the gospel not because he was a criminal. This truth was evident to the whole palace guard (Praetorian Guard) who was guarding Paul as he was imprisoned. During his imprisonment Paul was chained by his wrist to a guard and those who came to the house where Paul was imprisoned heard the gospel being given to everyone who came to see or minister to him.

1:14-17 – Paul was encouraged not only by the advance of the gospel within the Roman Imperial government but also by those individuals who were emboldened to speak for Christ because of his imprisonment. Paul's imprisonment served as an encouragement to others to speak more courageously and fearlessly for Christ. There were two groups of believers who were emboldened; 1) those who preached Christ out of love and goodwill for Paul and 2) those who preached Christ out of envy and rivalry (strife) with Paul.

Those who preached Christ out of envy and rivalry did so because of their selfish ambition. They were believers who wanted to stir up trouble for Paul so they could better themselves. They were using Paul's imprisonment to accuse Paul of being sinful and that the Lord had chastened him through imprisonment. Their motive was to turn believers from following and listening to Paul to themselves...and by doing so they thought to add affliction to Paul during his imprisonment.

Those who preached Christ out of love and goodwill did so because of their love for Christ and Paul. They were believers who knew Paul was imprisoned because of his past and continued defense of the gospel; they knew prison was a place Paul was called to by God. They were constrained to share the gospel with others because of their love for Christ and Paul.

1:18 - Paul conclusion to this circumstance of two groups for vary different motives advancing the gospel – "What does it matter?" (this phrase has the meaning of "what then"). Paul rejoiced that the gospel of Christ was being preached. The gospel message being preached was the same for both groups. He was not rejoicing

in the faction that was occurring within the body of Christ, but he was rejoicing that the gospel of Christ was being preached to others.

Verses 12-18 present Paul as a positive model for all believers. Rather than valuing his own comfort, reputation, and freedom above all else, he put the advancement of God's will and plan first. He discerned what was best (v. 10). He could maintain a truly joyful attitude, even in unpleasant circumstances, because he derived his joy from seeing God glorified through the advancement of the gospel —rather than from seeing himself exalted. His behavior in prison had been pure and blameless (cf. v. 10) in spite of his circumstances.

Philippians 1:19-26 (Paul's Anticipated Deliverance).

1:19 - Paul writes to the believers in Philippi that he knows that "this" (Paul's imprisonment) has occurred to further the advance of the gospel. He tells the Philippians that he was assured that he will be delivered through their prayers and the help (support) given by the Spirit of Jesus Christ. The Greek word 'soteria' is translated as "delivered/deliverance" and "salvation" can be understood in several ways; so the phrase "my deliverance" has several possible interpretations.

- 1) It refers to Paul's ultimate salvation.
- 2) It refers to Paul's deliverance from threatened execution.
- 3) It refers to Paul's vindication by the Roman emperor's ruling.
- 4) It refers to Paul's eventual release from prison.

It is probable that Paul chose to write this phrase because he knew the openness of it to interpretation by the Philippians. What Paul clearly communicated was that there is a vital connection between prayer and the Holy Spirit's enablement.

1:20 - Paul did not want to feel ashamed ("be put to shame") when he stood before the Lord at His judgment seat (cf. 1 John 2:28). The phrase "my earnest expectation and hope" can be understood as meaning "my hope-filled eager expectation," which can be illustrated by someone sticking their head out of a window of a car to look forward to getting out at fun-filled destination. Paul was confident that, with the prayer support of the Philippians and the Holy Spirit's enablement, he would not be ashamed irrespective of the results of his imprisonment. Nevertheless he felt the need for courage. After all, he still had to stand before Caesar and undergo a Roman trial. His greatest desire, however, was that he would continue to *exalt* Jesus Christ, whether that meant that he lived or died. The use of the passive "be exalted" rather than the active "I exalt Christ" is unusual. It reflects Paul's conviction that essentially the Christian life involves following the leading of God's indwelling Spirit, rather than seizing the initiative and doing things for God (cf. Gal. 5:18).

1:21 – This verse is considered by many the key verse of Paul's letter to the Philippians. Paul was not certain if he would experience death or release, but he was certain of one thing – he wanted Christ to be exalted in his body either way. Paul placed "to me" first in this verse for emphasis. Jesus' work on the cross had become the reason for all that Paul did. Paul desired that Christ be glorified whether he lived or died. Paul desired that he would not be ashamed of Christ or the gospel, but rather that he would boldly proclaim Christ – this was the essence of Paul's life. Yet for Paul he knew if he lived it was to spread the gospel of Christ, but if he died for Christ that was gain (beneficial) because he would go to be with Christ, the One he served.

Paul's hope for the future was centered on Christ, which kept him from making too much of his circumstances. The prospect of seeing Jesus Christ, and standing before Him one day motivated Paul, and constituted the goal for all he did. Many people today, if they were honest, would have to say that for them to live is money, fame, happiness, family, or any of a multitude of idols, not Christ.

1:22-24 - Paul begins verse 22 with “But if” meaning if he lived he would continue to spread the gospel and there would be fruit for his labor. If he had a choice between living and dying for Christ, he was at a loss as how to decide between the two – he did not know which to choose (*note – this dilemma only occurs for the true believer in Christ*). Paul stated he was “hard pressed” (in a strait between two – a narrow path with a rock wall on either side allowing the traveler to only go straight forward) to know what would bring the most glory to God. His personal desire was to “depart” (Greek “*analuō*” which means to release a prisoner from their bonds) and be with Christ. For Paul his death was far better (very much better) for him than life because it would release him from persecutions, hardships, physical pain and sickness (*note – if Paul believed in purgatory or soul sleep he would not have stated he preferred death*). But Paul knew that others, like the Philippians, needed him as well. For the believer’s sake, it was more necessary that he remain alive and engaged in his ministry.

1:25-26 – After his examination of his choices, Paul was confident that he would be released and would be able to continue with them. Paul was convinced that he would help them continue to “progress” in their faith. “Progress” is a term that means to blaze a new trail or cut a new path for an army to follow. By helping the Philippians to grow in their faith there would be a resultant increase of joy.

Paul’s “coming” to the Philippians has the meaning of a ‘king’s welcome’, an arrival to Philippi that had pomp and pageantry (Greek “*parousia*” meaning ‘a king’s welcome and presence’ is also used in I Thess. 3:13 by Paul to describe the Lord’s coming). Paul’s coming to them again would produce an “overflowing/abundant” rejoicing in Christ (literally meaning ‘that your rejoicing may be more abundant in Christ Jesus for me’). Their rejoicing/exulting in Christ would come because the one who had taught them about Christ with would be with them again.

Philippians 1:27 – 2:16 (Paul’s Key Exhortation – The Example of Christ).

Philippians 1:27-30 (Exhortation to a worthy walk).

1:27-28 - Paul exhorts the Philippians to honor and glorify Christ, which is his primary reason for writing this letter to the Philippians. His challenge was for them to “conduct” themselves in such a way that it brought glory to Christ. The phrase “conduct yourselves in a manner worthy/let your conduct be worthy” is one Greek word – “*politeuesthe*” - which means “to live as a citizen.” The Philippians understood this word because they took great pride in their Roman citizenship (cf. Acts 16:12, 20-21). Paul was exhorting them to live with integrity as ‘citizens of heaven’ and to live consistently what they declare they believe, teach, and preach. Whether he was there or not, he wanted to hear of their godly conduct.

Paul exhorts them to “stand firm in one spirit, with one mind striving/contending” meaning to work together in genuine unity as one man and as a team working together for the faith of the gospel, the body of truth. Unity of the body of Christ is introduced by Paul here because they had a common cause and they were in and a part of the body of Christ. “One spirit...one mind” is a theme that Paul will continue throughout his letter to the Philippians.

Paul wanted the believers in Philippi to ‘strive together’ (literal meaning – “to struggle along with someone”) as a team striving for victory against a common foe. In their ‘striving’ Paul encourages them to not let the opposition from their foe to intimidate them, frighten them or detract them from their mission. Paul encourages them to live courageously for Christ in the midst of opposition and persecution. When the enemies of the believers fail to intimidate or frighten them, it is a sign that the enemies of God will be destroyed and eternally lost (v.19, II Thess. 1:4-8). It is also a sign that the saints of God will be delivered by God Himself.

1:29-30. Paul closes his exhortation by stating that the believer's suffering and persecution is a gift of grace from Christ. Paul's suffering for Christ was not an accidental or divine punishment, as some declared, his suffering for Christ was a sign of God's favor. It is challenging for believers to understand that it is a privilege to suffer for Jesus Christ, but it is as suffering is a tool that the LORD uses to bring glory to His Son (cf. James 1:3-4, I Pet. 1:6-7).

The Philippians and Paul shared the same struggle and suffering. It was a struggle and suffering that the believers in Philippi had already observed in the life of Paul and Silas when they saw them imprisoned. Paul wanted them to be encouraged – that even though he was in the same circumstance as before in Philippi, God would be with him.

Paul's call to the Philippians to unite in steadfastly enduring the opposition of unbelievers in their area was not a request for them to do something he himself had not done. He was urging them to unite with one another, and with him, and to view suffering for their faith as a privilege that would glorify Jesus Christ. This exhortation is necessary for today, when we feel tempted to agree with, or go along with unbelievers, rather than taking a firm stand for our Lord.

Philippians 2:1-4 (Foundation for unity)

2:1 – Because the Philippians were to strive together with one spirit and one mind, Paul continues his exhortation to the Philippians by expounding on the importance of unity and steadfastness as essential in the work of the gospel. Paul introduces his exhortation on unity and steadfastness with a word of encouragement, 'if there be any consolation', which means "to come along side and help, counsel, exhort." He then states four conditional clauses that describe the qualities that were to be true in the believer's life. These four qualities are first-class conditions in the Greek meaning that each quality Paul writes is something he considers to be true in the life of the believer. The "if" could be translated "since" or "since you have", which brings clarity to Paul's exhortation.

- 1) Since encouragement (help, counsel, and exhortation) comes from being united in Christ, and
- 2) Since comfort comes from His love, and
- 3) Since there is fellowship (an indwelling partnership) with the Spirit, and
- 4) Since there is tenderness and compassion from Christ toward believers... therefore, each believer should have spiritual unity with believers in Christ.

Unity within a body of believers is based on these four qualities; and if we are in Christ we should be keenly aware of what we have in Christ. How real are these qualities of being in Christ in your life? How are you getting along with everyone in your church family? Humility and submissiveness are critical behaviors in creating and supporting unity, which was exhibited by Christ in His life.

2:2 - Paul exhorted the Philippian believers that they would make his joy complete if they could live and work together harmoniously – striving together with one spirit and one mind. Corresponding to the four qualities in 2:1, Paul lists four ways their unity and harmony would be expressed toward one another. They would:

- 1) Be like minded – meaning think the same way, and
- 2) Have the same love toward one another, and
- 3) Be in one accord ('one-souled') – meaning being united in spirit, knit in harmony having the same desires, ambitions, and goals, and
- 4) Be one in purpose – meaning to be collectively intent on one purpose.

The quality of the relationship between church leaders and the church family is essential to the peace, unity and ministry of the church. To create and maintain unity and peace within a church requires a great deal of communication between leaders and members and this communication must be with the attitude of humility and submissiveness.

2:3-4 - Paul continued his exhortation by telling the Philippian believers that they must put away selfish behavior and personal self-interests if they were going to live and worship together in harmony. This describes the humility that is required for people to live and work together in unity. The foundation of unity is humility. Paul's exhortation reveals a problem within the church at Philippi that existed between certain believers (4:2) – a lack of harmony and unity.

Paul tells them that:

- 1) Nothing is to be done out of selfish ambition (selfishness, pride to seek to have their own way, pride that causes strife with others).
- 2) Nothing is to be done out of vain conceit (pursuit of personal glory, empty glory).
- 3) They should consider others more important than themselves (view themselves with humility not with pride).
- 4) They should consider and be concerned for the interests of others, not be focused only on themselves.

The emphasis of verse 3 is how we view other people, while the emphasis of verse 4 is how we relate to other people. These verses outline the critical requirements for living successfully with other people, especially with other believers. We must realize that we are to serve one-another in humility, not just to help others when we feel like it.

- 1) *A helper helps others when it is convenient. A servant serves others even when it is inconvenient.*
- 2) *A helper helps people that he or she likes. A servant serves people that he or she dislikes.*
- 3) *A helper helps with a view of obtaining personal satisfaction. A servant serves even when he or she dislikes the work.*
- 4) *A helper helps with an attitude of assisting another person. A servant serves with an attitude of enabling another person to succeed.*

Philippians 2:5-11 (Example of Christ)

This passage is the most important passage of Paul's letter to the Philippians. This paragraph is the focal point of his letter as Christ is the example that we are to follow because the secret of true joy in life is found in the way we think and live, which is to be Christ-like in attitude and action.

2:5 - Paul directs his exhortation to Christ as the example of humility and selfless concern for others. Paul exhorts the believers in Philippi to have the same attitude as Christ, to be like-minded as Christ; which He exhibited in His incarnation and through His example of selfless humility in life. The very quality of life that Paul was exhorting the Philippians to follow was observable in the life of Christ.

2:6 - Paul writes that Jesus Christ eternally has been God. Christ is the same nature and essence of God – and this is His continuous state. The word translated as “form” (*'morphe'*) stresses the inner reality of Christ as God meaning that the outward appearance of Christ accurately reveals the inner nature which was God. Christ, in His incarnation, embraced and became true humanity while being complete and absolute deity. Christ did not give up, lay aside, or surrender His full deity and attributes when He became a man; but He did voluntarily give up the independent exercise of some of His divine attributes for the purpose of living among men with their human limitations.

Therefore, Christ in human form was equal with God. Christ did not regard His former manner of existence something He wanted to hold onto. His equality with God was not something He seized (translated “robbery” or “to be grasped”) because He did not think this was something to be exploited to His own advantage. Christ emptied Himself (made Himself nothing), taking on the very nature of a servant, being made in human likeness. Christ’s humility, as described by Paul, is clearly seen in Christ’s actions in John 13:3-17 where He washed the feet of the disciples.

Christ set aside His privileges as God while taking on the limitation of humanity. Christ, by becoming human, voluntarily ‘emptied Himself’ / ‘laid aside His privileges’ / ‘made Himself nothing’ to the point that He did not demand normal human rights, but rather allowed Himself to be subject to persecution by His own created beings (man) who hated God. Christ gave up face-to-face interaction with God the Father, independent authority, eternal riches, and favored relationship. He took on all the attributes of humanity, becoming fully man yet retaining His deity being fully God.

Christ did submit to a voluntary nonuse of some of His divine attributes in order to be truly human. Christ did not exercise His divine attributes on His own behalf though they had abundant display in His miracles. This is qualified to some extent by the fact that His omniscience is revealed in His prophetic ministry, but He did not use His divine knowledge to make His own path easier. He suffered all the inconveniences of the time in which He lived even though in His divine omniscience He had full knowledge of every human device ever conceived for human comfort. In His human nature there was growth in knowledge, but this was a contradiction of His divine omniscience. Limitations in knowledge as well as limitations in power are related to the human nature and not to the divine. His omnipotence was manifested in many ways and specifically in the many miracles which He did, in some cases by the power of the Holy Spirit and in others on the basis of His own word of authority. He did not use His omnipotence to make His way easy and He knew the fatigue of labor and travelling by walking. Though in His divine nature He was omnipresent, He did not use this attribute to avoid the long journeys on foot nor was He ever seen in His ministry in more than one place at a time. It can be said with confidence that Christ restricted the use and benefits of His attributes as they pertained to His walk on earth and voluntarily chose not to use His powers to lift Himself above ordinary human limitations.

2:7 – Furthermore, Jesus Christ became "in the likeness of men" (cf. Rom. 8:3). "Likeness" (Gr. *homoiomati*) does not mean exactness (Gr. *eikon*). Christ had a divine nature as well as a human nature – at the same time. Even though Jesus had a fully human nature, that nature was not sinful. Every human being has a sinful human nature and is subject to death. Christ’s humanity was in its *fallen* and *weakened* condition and He was burdened with *the results* of humanity’s sin (Isa. 53:2-6), which meant He was subject to death even though He was not sinful.

Paul described Christ’s self-emptying as "taking the form of a bond-servant." "Taking" (Gr. *labon*) does not imply an exchange but adding on something. Christ did not lay aside the form of God; He did not cease to be God. *He added on the "form" of man as a bond-servant (slave), which reflects the humility of Christ as He came to do the will of God in becoming the perfect sacrifice for sin – and to provide the way of salvation for mankind.*

2:8 - Christ appeared to other people just as any other man. There were no visual clues in His “appearance” that He was deity or sinless. This was another aspect of His humility as He was clearly recognizable as a human. Christ was clearly human but He was without disease, deformity, mental deficiency or other human health challenges.

Christ humbled Himself to the point of not demanding normal human rights. He humbled Himself by being obedient to the Father's will (Matt. 26:36-46). He humbled Himself by allowing His own created beings, who hated and rejected God, to persecute Him. He humbled Himself by allowing Himself to die as a criminal in the eyes of men by being put to death on a cross (cf. Isa. 53:12; Heb. 5:8). *Hanging on a tree* was a sign to the Jews that the person disgraced in this way was under "the curse of God" (Deut. 21:23; cf. Gal. 3:13). There was no one who was a better example of humility and selfless concern for others than Christ.

Christ is the example that we are to follow. We are to live a harmonious, humble life, based on the example of Christ. How humble are we in our daily walk? Paul has just explained (2:5-8) how Christ was the example of selfless ambition and humility; emptying Himself to become a servant who willingly died a criminal's death to provide the way of salvation to those who believe. How sensitive and submissive are we to doing God's will in our life no matter the circumstances or situation? Warren Wiersbe has stated: "The test of the submissive mind is not just how much we are willing to take in terms of suffering, but how much we are willing to give in terms of sacrifice."

2:9 - Paul went on to explain that Christ's humility, selfless concern, submission, and obedience would be recognized by God the Father. God the Father literally "super-exalted" (Gr. *hyperypsose*) Christ to the place of highest honor in heaven, which was an answer to Christ's prayer in John 17:5. This exaltation included Christ's resurrection (Matt.28:1-8; Mark 16:1-8; Luke 24:1-11), ascension (Acts 1:9-11), glorification in heaven at God the Father's right hand (Acts 2:33; Heb. 1:3) and His intercessor position as high-priest (Heb. 4:14 – 5:10). Christ in His exaltation will receive a name that is above every name (possibly a formal name for God the Son, the God-man - cf. Rev. 19:12,16); a new identity. The name that God the Father gives Him will not be just a title; it will be a name that refers to His person, His position and His status.

2:10-11 - The purpose of God the Father giving Christ – His Son, the God-man - such great exaltation and a "name" suitable to Christ's exalted position, is that "every" person "will bow" in submission to His authority (cf. Isa. 45:23, where all bow before the LORD and Exod. 20:3, where God prohibited everyone from worshipping anyone but Himself). The extent of Christ's authority in this exalted position extends to all creation and created beings in heaven, earth or under the earth. All will submit to the authority of Christ and all will bow before Him to acknowledge and worship Him as LORD. It is at THE NAME that belongs to Christ the Messiah that every knee will bow to submit themselves to Him as their LORD.

At that day, all created beings, angelic and mankind, will confess with their tongue that Jesus Christ is LORD. The Greek word translated "confess" means "to acknowledge, to affirm, to agree." Verbal confession by all created beings of Christ being LORD of all will accompany their physical bowing of their knee in humility and submission to Christ as LORD. This recognition, submission, and confession by all created beings to Jesus Christ as LORD, brings glory to God the Father.

Paul has given us a very powerful example of humility, submission and faithfulness through the life of Christ. Christ is the greatest example of life of humility and submissiveness yielded to doing God's will that could ever been given. And the humility, submission, faithfulness and exaltation of Christ should be a motivation for us, as believers; to live a life of submissive humility doing God's will faithfully. For the day is coming when we will bow before Christ and confess that He Is LORD Of All. If we submit to God and to one another for the glory of God, as Christ did, rather than for selfish glory, our motivation is correct.

Philippians 2:12-18 (Responsibility of the Believer)

Paul closes his exhortation with a challenge for each believer to thoroughly consider the example of Christ and determine what their response will be to Christ's example.

2:12 - Paul now directs the attention of the Philippian believers back to his exhortation from 1:27 through 2:11 by the use of the term – “Therefore.” Paul admonishes the Philippian believers to follow and obey his instruction, which was drawn from Christ's example, because Christ obeyed His Father and carried out His plan (2:8). The Greek word translated "obey" (*hypakouein*) contains the ideas of hearing and submitting to what is heard.

Paul called the Philippian believers “my beloved / my dear friends” because of his experiences with them. He reminded them that they had always willingly and quickly followed his instructions when he was there with them....and that they should continue to do so even though he was not there with them. He had a special request of them – to continue to work out their salvation with fear and trembling.

The Greek word translated “work out” means “to continually work to bring something to completion”. This does not mean salvation comes through works. The Philippian believers were not told to work for their salvation but to “work out” the salvation already given to them. Paul is writing to state that it is the believer's responsibility to actively pursue obedience in the process of sanctification. The believer's pursuit of obedience is to be done in fear and trembling; which refers to the attitude the believers are to have. This is an attitude of complete trust in God that involves a healthy fear of offending God coupled with a righteous awe and respect for Him.

We obtain salvation by receiving it as a gift (Eph. 2:8), but having received it freely, we have a responsibility to cultivate and grow it (sanctification). In justification and glorification, God does all the work (Eph. 2:9; Jude 24), but in sanctification we have a part to play. We "work out" our salvation by obeying the Holy Spirit, who leads us in the will of God (Gal. 5:16). In the context, the particular aspect of sanctification in view involves achieving unity through humility. As we work out our own sanctification, we must remember certain things: We serve a holy God, we have a strong and crafty adversary, and we are weak and dependent on God for all that we need. Such awareness will produce the attitude of "fear and trembling" that Paul wrote about. This attitude is not inconsistent with joy and confidence in the Lord but rather is complementary.

2:13 - The only way this “working out” of one's salvation can occur is through God who enables it. The Greek word translated “works” means “energizes and provides enablement”. It is God who actually performs the good works in the lives of the believer. God energizes the believer's will, desire, and action. The Greek word translated “will” means “the studied intent to fulfill a planned purpose”.

God works in the believer so they can do His good pleasure and accomplish His good purpose. God is "at work," not just with them, but in them, to provide motivation and enabling strength (Gr. *energein*, from which we get the word "energy"). Both divine enablement and human responsibility are involved in getting God's work done. Believers are partners with Him in laboring together to do His work; we do not work alone. God enables believer's to be willing and desirous to do His work. God carries out this work through the indwelling Holy Spirit, and His main tool is the Word of God.

This verse is one of the most comforting in the New Testament. Sometimes we want to do right, but seem to lack the energy or ability. This verse assures us that God will help us. At other times, we cannot even seem to want to do right. Here we learn that God can also provide the desire to do His will when we do not have it. If

we find that we do not want to do right, we can ask God to work in us to create a desire to do His will. This verse gives us confidence that God desires both to motivate and to enable us.

2:14 - Paul now provides specific instructions on how to “work out” ones salvation while doing God’s good pleasure. Paul understood the situation of the Philippian believers. He wanted them to stand for righteousness while living in a corrupt society...so they could be shining lights for the gospel to the unbeliever. Paul’s first word is “do all things without,” which is an emphatic emphasis by Paul. Paul goes on to describe what needs to be absent in all activity in the life of a believer: “complaining/grumbling” is the initial activity that results in “disputing” (cf. 1 Cor. 10:10; Phil. 2:2; 4:2). Every action, word, and deed in the believer’s life was to be done without complaining or arguing. This was not a focus in a singular event, but it is to be a continuous action. The Greek word translated “complaining” means “a bad attitude expressed in grumbling”. The Greek word translated “disputing / questioning / arguing” is a legal term which refers to the practice of going to court to settle a difference.” The Philippian church was evidently complaining and arguing amongst themselves, in the public eye of the community, as well as with others in the community. They were not united and one in Christ...and the unbelievers were not being attracted to the gospel because of their actions.

We frustrate and stop God's work of producing unity within the church, which He does by reproducing the mind of Christ in us (i.e., humility), when we complain and argue.

2:15 – Paul’s exhortation to “work out” our salvation with fear and trembling (v.12) rather than with grumbling and disputing (v.14), we will show (“prove”) ourselves to be “blameless / pure and innocent / harmless” before others. “Blameless” (Gr. *amemptos*) means “without blame, above reproach” because we deal with our sins as we should, which results in unity. The believers in Philippi were evidently complaining and arguing so much that they were creating division between themselves and others in the community. Paul is instructing the believers in Philippi that they needed to get their personal lives right before God and with each other. They were to be “blameless” and “harmless / innocent / pure,” which means “genuine, full value, integrity; not diluted, not weakened.” As believers with the ‘mind of Christ,’ we are to be free from arguing and division even though we live “in the midst” of a twisted (“crooked”) and perverted (“perverse”) generation. In a world that has turned their backs on God and truth, the believer is to “shine like stars” (cf. Matt. 5:14) before them (Note: this is the Law of Contrast in effect). It is God’s plan to use His Word and His children, the believer in Christ, to transform His enemies into His children, by the regenerating work of the Holy Spirit....and as believers we are His ambassadors.

2:16 – Paul’s exhortation changes at this point as he interjects a personal note. Paul tells the Philippian believers to “hold out / hold forth / hold firmly” the word of life. The believers are to “hold fast” the word of life so they could ‘hold it forth’ to others so others will come to know Christ. Paul wanted the Philippians to continue serving as he explained, so that when he stood before the judgment seat of Christ he would be able to show that he had not labored in vain. Paul wanted to look back at his life and know that he had accomplished God’s purpose given to him by God. This was not selfish ambition but rather a desire of obedience to accomplish God’s will in his life.

Philippians 2:17-18 – Paul was aware that he might receive a death sentence, as he was writing from prison in Rome. He compared his present life to the pouring out of a “drink offering” in Israel’s worship (cf. 2 Tim. 4:6; Num. 15:1-10; Num. 28:4-7). After the priest offered a lamb, a ram, or a bull as a burnt offering, he poured wine on top of or beside the altar that held the burning animal sacrifice. The steam rising up symbolized the rising of the offering to God to whom the sacrifice was made. This was the last act in the sacrificial ceremony.

Paul’s desire was to be able to rejoice when he saw Jesus; to be sure that he had not labored in vain.

Paul viewed his life as a drink offering being poured out on the Philippian's sacrificial service and offering. The phrase "the sacrifice and service of your faith / the sacrifice and service coming from your faith" is a figure of speech in the Greek ("*hendiadys*"); its meaning is "the sacrificial service arising from your faith." The Greek word translated "service" means "a work considered an act of worship, a ceremony, a priestly service." The sacrifice and service of the Philippians stemmed from their faith; they had offered their lives to Christ. Paul willingly gave his life for the life of the Philippian believers....this was his drink offering...and he rejoiced in his offering of himself.

Yet we know that the Philippians would not "rejoice" over the prospect of Paul's death; but they would rejoice in the knowledge that they, as Paul, had offered themselves as acceptable sacrifices to God (cf. Rom. 12:1). The apostle urged them not to sorrow over their own trials and his, but to rejoice as they worked out their own salvation by adopting his attitude toward their situation in life. They could "share" their "joy with" Paul as they communicated with him, and assured him of their joy in the Lord.

Paul's example is a great challenge for us today as believers. Do we 'work out' our salvation each day? Do we 'hold fast' God's Word? Do we serve the LORD as we ought? Do we view our life as a sacrifice to the LORD? Do we invest our life into others so they may work out their salvation by holding fast to the Word of God as they serve in faith?

Philippians 2:19-24 (Timothy example)

2:19-20 - Paul told the Philippian believers that it was his hope that he would be sending Timothy to them. He explained that his plan was subject to the will of God when he said that he hoped "in the Lord Jesus" to send Timothy shortly. The primary purpose of Timothy's visit was to "learn" the "condition" of the Philippian believers, and to report that to Paul. Paul desired to hear good news from the Philippians. He was concerned for the spiritual and physical welfare of the Philippian believers – and Timothy would be the one Paul trusted to provide him with accurate account of the state of the Philippian believers.

Paul knew (and expressed) that Timothy had the same heart and concern for the Philippian believers as he did. Timothy was selfless as he was more concerned about others than for himself. Paul stated that there was no one else with him who was like-minded – "no one of equal soul / a kindred spirit" – in their love and concern for them as believers.

2:21-22 - Paul knew (and expressed) that Timothy was often tested, and was proven to be genuine and worthy. Paul makes a general statement "they all seek their own interests / for all seek their own," which indicates that other workers may not have made this trip a top priority and/or they did not put the interests of Christ above their own as Timothy did.

Paul was Timothy's spiritual father and Timothy worked with Paul like a son would his father. Timothy had demonstrated his worthiness as a servant of Christ and of Paul over more than 10 years. He had established a good reputation ("his proven worth"), not only in Philippi, but wherever he had served. Together they served the Lord (as slaves) in the work of the gospel.

A believer who puts the interests of Christ before his or her own is still a rare individual (cf. 1:21). Not all Christians are partners in the work of the gospel; but working together in a partnership in the gospel is the Christian's calling in life (cf. Matt. 28:19-20). Warren Wiersbe wrote: "The submissive mind is not the product of an hour's sermon, or a week's seminar, or even a year's service. The submissive mind grows in us as, like Timothy, we yield to the Lord and seek to serve others."

2:23-24 - Paul closes his narrative about Timothy with a reaffirmation of his intention to send Timothy to the Philippian believers. Paul hoped "to send" Timothy to Philippi 'immediately' with a report of his situation and plans – if that was the Lord's will. Evidently Paul expected that a decision in his case would be coming soon. Paul expressed confidence in the Lord – "if the Lord wills"- that he would be free to go to Philippi himself. It should be noted that Paul was released but there is no written record of him visiting Philippi after his release.

Philippians 2:25-30 – (Epaphroditus example).

2:25 – Paul thought it was necessary to send a messenger to the Philippians before he and Timothy could arrive. Paul sends Epaphroditus, whose name means "loving and charming," as the bearer of the letter from Paul to the Philippians. Epaphroditus had been the bearer of the gift from the Philippian believers to Paul and it appears that the Philippian believers intended for Epaphroditus to stay with Paul and help him in his ministry; but Paul thought it necessary to cut short his ministry and have him return to Philippi.

Paul described wanted the believers at Philippi to know how much he thought of Epaphroditus by describing his relationships with him. Paul called Epaphroditus: 1) "my brother" – one who shared in-the-faith with Paul; 2) "fellow worker" – one who was a partner and served in the gospel ministry; 3) "fellow soldier" – one who entered into spiritual warfare by standing up for and proclaiming the gospel; 4) "messenger" – one who carried a message or gift to others; and 5) "minister" – one who ministers to one's needs. Epaphroditus must have willingly served Christ and Paul, in a manner similar to Timothy, when he arrived in Rome for Paul to have used these terms. Paul was specific in describing his relationship with Epaphroditus because the Philippian church had sent Epaphroditus as its "messenger / apostle" to serve Paul. Paul did not want the Philippians to misunderstand why he was sending Epaphroditus back to Philippi.

2:26 - Paul explained that Epaphroditus had a deep concern for the believers in Philippi; and that he was deeply distressed (meaning "an agony created by restlessness from turmoil and trauma") because of their knowledge of his illness. This distress created a deep desire within Epaphroditus to return to Philippi. Epaphroditus was more concerned about the Philippian believer's concern and apprehension over his illness than he was of his own physical condition.

2:27 - Paul described the illness of Epaphroditus as being serious to the point that he almost died. Paul gives God the credit for restoring Epaphroditus to health and praises Him for His mercy shown to Epaphroditus in restoring him to health. For Paul, he already had sorrow that was associated with his imprisonment...and he was thankful that he was spared additional sorrow that would have come upon him had Epaphroditus died.

Note: Paul did not have the ability to heal everyone he wanted to be healthy. Divine healing has always been subject to the will of God, and not something that someone can have or do whenever he or she desires it and/or prays for it (cf. 1 Tim. 5:23; 2 Tim. 4:20).

2:28 - The concern that Epaphroditus and the Philippians had for one another led Paul to send him back to them as soon as he could ("all the more eagerly"). Paul did so for two reasons: One, he wanted the Philippian believers to see Epaphroditus and rejoice with him in his restored health; Two, Paul would have less anxiety for Epaphroditus and the Philippian believers because they would be there to care for one another, relieving Paul of this burden while in prison.

2:29-30 - Paul encouraged the Philippian believers to receive Epaphroditus in the Lord with joy and honor; he wanted Epaphroditus' homecoming to be a joyous occasion. Paul urged the Philippians to regard Epaphroditus highly ("hold men like him in high regard"), and to welcome him back wholeheartedly ("with all

joy") because Epaphroditus was held in high regard by Paul because of his selfless service to Christ....and it was while he was serving and risking his life for Christ that he became ill. Paul appreciated Epaphroditus' service; it was a service that he was doing as a representative of the Philippian believers because they could not come to Rome to serve him. Epaphroditus was doing what they could not do.

Specifically, Epaphroditus had come "close to death" because of his service "for the work of Christ." It may be possible that Paul was using 'wordplay' here. Aphrodite (Venus) was the goddess of gamblers. When a pagan Greek threw the dice he would cry out "*epaphroditos!*" meaning "favorite of Aphrodite." Epaphroditus' name may have connections with this custom. If so, Paul may have written that Epaphroditus gambled with his life, but won, because God was there and 'had mercy on him as wordplay on his name.

Paul's emphasis in chapter 2 was on the importance of unity, and its necessary prerequisite, humility. For true partnership in the work of the gospel to exist, there must be unity among the workers. The key to achieving unity is for each believer to adopt the humble mind of Christ. Paul wanted to send Timothy and Epaphroditus to Philippi and it was his desire that the Philippian believers receive Epaphroditus and Timothy warmly in the Lord for their service to Christ and to him. He said things about those two faithful fellow workers that would assure their warm reception when they arrived. Paul's descriptions of them have lasting value because they are good examples of men who possessed the mind of Christ. They were, therefore, true partners in the gospel. This is an example and challenge for us today as we serve Christ in our local church – to serve with unity and humility to further the gospel of Christ.

Philippians 3:1-4:9 (Paul example – Walking Steadfastly)

Paul now turns to the second major quality that he introduced in 1:27-30; steadfastness in the face of opposition to the gospel (cf. 1:7, 28). He begins this exhortation with a charge to the Philippians to rejoice in the LORD and he ends this exhortation with a charge to maintain peace within the body of believers as they work together to further the gospel.

3:1 - Paul begins this exhortation with the word – 'Finally'. 'Finally' is a transition word that leads to a conclusion. Here Paul uses it as an introduction a new subject while tying what he had previously written to his concluding exhortation. Paul encourages the believers in Philippi to 'rejoice in the Lord'. There were situations and circumstances in Philippi which were causing discouragement and discord among the believers. Paul, even though he was a prisoner in Rome, was exhorting the believers to rejoice. As the believers in Philippi would see, Paul had good reason to encourage them to 'rejoice in the Lord'. Paul gave the importance of rejoicing special emphasis here. *Regardless of circumstances, believers in Christ can and should always rejoice in the person and work of Jesus Christ. He is the basis of true joy in all circumstances.*

Paul then redirects them to one of the purposes of his exhortation – 'to write the same things to you again'. For Paul it was not any trouble ('it is not tedious') for him to remind the Philippians again of his previous teachings; teachings that would benefit them and become a safeguard for them. False teachers can and do rob Christians of joy and unity. Paul and the Philippians were dealing with a false teaching that set aside Christ as the preeminent person in the life of the believer and would make the believer the center of his own life. Here Paul was encouraging the Philippians to not let their faith in Christ become debased into some form of Jewish ritualistic religion. His exhortation would be an additional "safeguard" against their yielding to false teachers and their evil influence.

3:2-3a – The Philippians were encountering problems with one particular group, the Judaizers. Judaizers were creating many problems for Paul and his ministry of the gospel to the Gentiles. Paul writes a three-fold

repetition of "beware," which underlines the serious dangers the Philippians faced from the Judaizers. Paul called the Judaizers "dogs"; the term "dogs" meant filthy animals because dogs at the time of Paul were essentially wild scavengers that ran free and created trouble. The phrase "evil workers" stresses the evil character of their labors; specifically men who would do evil by design and on purpose. The phrase "false circumcision / mutilators of the flesh" gives the most insight to the false teaching of the Judaizers; the Greek word translated "circumcision" in this verse means "to cut down or to cut off." Paul used two Greek verbs that are very similar. *Peritemnein* means to circumcise, and *katatemnein* means to mutilate. *Peritemnein* describes the sacred sign and work of circumcision, but *katatemnein*, as in Leviticus 21:5, describes forbidden self-mutilation. So what Paul is saying is this: "You Judaizers think that you are circumcised, but really you are only mutilated," because the Judaizers "circumcision" was not a sacred sign but rather a physical mutilation.

By teaching the need of "circumcision," the Judaizers were teaching that the 'works of the Law' were necessary, in addition to faith in Christ, for salvation and Christian living. They taught that people could only be justified and become a believer in Christ through Judaism and submission to the Mosaic Law. The Judaizers emphasized "circumcision," because it was the rite that brought a person into Judaism, which they viewed as a prerequisite to justification (cf. Acts 15:1). This false teaching promoted trusting in oneself and/or in the rite-keeping of circumcision for salvation. The Judaizers emphasis on the Old Testament rite of circumcision caused many problems for Gentile believers, not just the believers in Philippi.

Paul clearly stated to the believers ("the circumcision") at Philippi that the true people of God. Paul was referring to the 'circumcision of the heart' that happens when a person trusts in Jesus Christ. Paul uses three phrases to characterize 'the circumcised of the heart'; 1) they worship God in the Spirit of God (real worship is with the heart when the Holy Spirit guides the heart to learn of Christ with praise and adoration to God the Father), 2) they glory in Christ Jesus (looking to Jesus as our Savior who makes us acceptable to God), and 3) they put no confidence in the flesh (putting no confidence in anything that we can naturally do to make us acceptable to or accepted by God). True believers have no confidence in the flesh or the works of man for salvation. Those who rely on rites and ceremonies for salvation do not have the Spirit of God. They are not believers in the gospel. True believers understand that they cannot save themselves but they must accept the person and work of Christ Jesus by faith for their salvation.

3:3b-6 - For the sake of the argument, Paul adopted the Judaizers' attitude of confidence in the flesh. He did this in order to show that his rejection of Jewish advantages was not because he lacked them. Paul emphasized the point of having no confidence in the flesh or the works of man by presenting a brief autobiography. He cited seven personal advantages, the first four being things he inherited (v. 5a-d), and the last three things he chose by conviction (vv. 5e-6). If anyone had the credentials to trust in the flesh and the works of man, it was Paul. From the viewpoint of man, Paul was the perfect Jew who was righteous before God because of his impeccable background and his record of legalistic righteousness.

Paul came from a pious Jewish family and had been encouraged in the "things of God" through the religious training from his parents all his life. Paul was:

- 1) Circumcised on the eighth day after his birth according to the Law of Moses (Lev. 12:3; cf. Gen. 17:12).
- 2) A full-blooded Jew, a direct descendent of Israel (Abraham).
- 3) A member of the tribe of Benjamin. The tribe of Benjamin was considered an elite tribe of Israel. Benjamin was the younger of the two sons born to Jacob's favorite wife, Rachel. Benjamin was the only son of Jacob who was born in the Promised Land. The tribe of Benjamin provided many mighty warriors throughout Israel's history (cf. Hos. 5:8). Israel's first lawful king came from the tribe of

Benjamin. Jerusalem and the temple stood within Benjamin's territory. This tribe was known for its loyalty as only it and Judah remained loyal to David's house when the monarchy divided in 931 B.C.

- 4) A 'Hebrew of Hebrews.' This phrase means that Paul was born to Hebrew parents who maintained the Hebrew traditions and language while living outside the Jewish homeland in a Roman / Greek society. Specifically, he learned the Hebrew language and studied the Old Testament in the original tongue, not like many other Jews of the day who could only speak and read Aramaic (cf. Acts 22:2).
- 5) A Pharisee. Paul had chosen to join the party of the Pharisees, the most orthodox of the sects within Judaism. Paul had been a disciple of the great Pharisee, Gamaliel (Acts 5:34; 22:3), and as a Pharisee he set himself to be the most earnest of the earnest observers of the Jewish Law (Gal 1:14). He also had relentlessly pursued the purity of Judaism by persecuting Christianity, which was deemed to be a false sect of Judaism.
- 6) A zealot for Judaism. Paul had been a zealous promoter of Judaism, even to the point of persecuting Christians to death. He had been an outstanding Pharisee. The implication is that the Judaizers who were persecuting him were weaklings in comparison to what Paul had done when he persecuted the church.
- 7) Blameless in legalistic righteousness. Paul was faultless in his keeping of the Law and all the traditions of the Law...as viewed by man. Paul's obedience to the Law, as it regulated external behavior, had been without blame. He was very conscientious about what the Law required and observed every law contained in the Oral Torah, which was the interpretive traditions of the Mosaic Law as written and taught by the Scribes.

3:7 - Paul had formerly regarded all these "things" he listed that he possessed, and whatever other religious things, as contributing to God's acceptance of him. Paul had been convinced that God would accept him for his works' sake. Each of his family and religious advantages strengthened his false hope of salvation. Paul had formerly regarded all these "things" he listed that he possessed as contributing to God's acceptance of him. But now he did not consider his background to be profitable (to be considered gain), but rather considered his background to be a loss for the sake of Christ. The Greek word translated "considered/counted" means "to think through or reflect on." Paul had considered his family and religious credentials and had come to the conclusion that they were a loss; it was a decision made once, was still correct, and was continuing in Paul's life.

Gordon D. Fee wrote this in his book entitled Paul's Letter to the Philippians: "While Christ did not consider God-likeness to accrue to his own advantage, but 'made himself nothing,' so Paul now considers his former 'gain' as 'loss' for the surpassing worth of knowing Christ. As Christ was 'found' in 'human likeness,' Paul is now 'found in Christ,' knowing whom means to be 'conformed' (echoing the morphé of a slave, 2:7) to his death (2:8). Finally, as Christ's humiliation was followed by God's 'glorious' vindication of him, so present 'suffering' for Christ's sake will be followed by 'glory' in the form of resurrection. As he has appealed to the Philippians to do, Paul thus exemplifies Christ's 'mindset,' embracing suffering and death. This is what it means 'to know Christ,' to be 'found in him' by means of his gift of righteousness; and as he was raised and exalted to the highest place, so Paul and the Philippian believers, because they are now 'conformed to Christ' in his death, will also be 'conformed' to his glory."

3:8 - Not only did Paul consider his earthly credentials as a loss but he considered everything in his life to be a loss in exchange for the surpassing greatness of knowing Christ Jesus personally. He had come to realize that absolutely nothing apart from Jesus Christ's work on the cross was of any value in his gaining God's acceptance. Good works does not improve our standing before God. Our earthly works are all like filthy rags (Isa. 64:6). Paul considered his former credentials and works as "rubbish / dung" so that he might gain Christ.

The Greek word translated "rubbish" (*skybalon*) occurs only here in the New Testament. Its derivation is uncertain, but it appears to have referred to excrement, food gone bad, scraps left over after a meal, and refuse. Therefore Paul means, through the use of the word "rubbish/dung," that his former standing, wealth, and position in the Jewish community were not only worthless, but strongly offensive and potentially dangerous.

Paul had learned to value Christ Jesus as his Lord; he came "to know" Christ. This knowledge (Gr. *gnosis*) is the kind that one obtains only by personal relationship. It is different from the knowledge we gain through objective academic study (Gr. *oida*), though information is part of our growing personal knowledge of Christ. It is knowledge of the heart in addition to knowledge of the head (cf. John 17:3; Gal. 4:9; 1 John 2:18, 29; 4:8). To gain this fuller knowledge of Christ, Paul had let everything else in life go. All Paul wanted was a fuller and deeper experiential appreciation of his Savior (cf. Ps. 73:25). *Is this our desire?* Those who "gain" Christ are found in Christ; which means they are spiritually united into Christ.

3:9 – Paul brings his thought to its conclusion – the future and his standing before Christ at the Judgment Seat of Christ (cf. II Cor. 5:10; Rom. 14:10-12). Being in Christ, Paul was not trusting in his own righteousness based on who he was and what he had done. Being in Christ, Paul was trusting in the righteousness which came by trusting in the righteousness that comes by faith in Christ Jesus. The righteousness that comes by faith in Christ is an imputed righteousness given by God to those who trust in Christ's perfect righteousness and obedience; it is this righteousness that is given those who trust in Christ for their salvation. Paul wanted to be found "in Him," namely, standing in the merit of Christ rather than in his own merit when he stood before the Lord.

Paul had made his choices in life, since his conversion, based on getting to "know" Christ better, and also on the fact that the Lord would one day evaluate his life. Before his conversion, Paul was resting on the merits of his own "righteousness" as the Mosaic Law defined it. After his conversion, he was resting on the merit of Christ's "righteousness," that the God credits to the believer's account when a believer places his or her trust in Christ (cf. Rom. 3:20-23). This righteousness comes to us "through faith" in Christ, and it comes to us "on the basis of "faith" from God (Rom. 1:17). Homer Kent wrote: "'Faith' is the very opposite of human works; it is the reception of God's work by those who acknowledge the futility of their own efforts to attain righteousness." *What is your trust in, self or Christ? Is your faith in your own righteousness or Christ's righteousness?*

3:10 - Paul resumes his thought about 'knowing' Christ. The Greek word translated as 'know' (*gnonai*) means "to know, to recognize, feel, appropriate – to know by experience," which suggests that for Paul, coming to 'know' Christ outweighed all other values in his life. So this statement by Paul is presented to the Philippian as a confession – he knows Christ as his Savior but he wants to know Christ more intimately and personally as his Lord. Paul expressed this thought earlier in verse 8, and now he is elaborating on it as he wants "to know" Christ in an intimate personal relationship.

Paul also expressed his desire to intimately know and personally experience the power of Christ's resurrection. Christ's power was best demonstrated by His resurrection, which displayed His power over the physical and spiritual worlds. The Greek word translated "power" means the ability to overcome resistance. Paul desired to know that power, the power of Christ's resurrection; he wanted the power to manifest itself in his life for God's glory (cf. Rom 6:4; Col. 3:1; Eph. 2:5-6).

Paul also wanted to grow in his experiential knowledge of "the fellowship of His (Christ's) sufferings" (cf. Acts 9:15-16). Paul saw suffering for the sake of Christ as only fair, since the Savior had suffered so much for him. Paul was an example of a believer in Christ who suffers because of his or her faithful testimony for Christ. One who suffers for their testimony for Christ can personally relate to Christ's feelings when He suffered for faithfully obeying His Father's will (cf. Matt. 26:38-41). Complete dedication to the will of God, which resulted in Jesus' sufferings, will also result in the believer's suffering. Our complete dedication to do the will of God in our life means suffering will occur and ultimately "death." It means death to our own agenda for life (Rom. 6:4-11), and it may result in physical death. There is a "fellowship" with Christ in that kind of suffering (cf. Rom. 6:8; Gal. 2:19-20). A believer who never suffers for the Lord's sake does not experience the 'fellowship' with Christ that comes through suffering. *Are we willing to 'know' Christ so intimately that we suffer for Him?*

3:11 – Paul concludes his confession about "knowing" Christ with a statement concerning his resurrection. In Paul's writing of this statement, it does not contain a purpose clause. Some translations of this verse begin the verse with "if by any means / in order that," but a better translation is "if somehow / and so, somehow," which indicates that Paul was expressing an expectation of dying – and his resurrection. The challenge in correctly understanding what Paul was meaning was his use of the phrase "to the resurrection from among the dead" where the word translated as "resurrection" (Gr. *exanastasin*) means "out-resurrection." This word is an unusual word as it only appears here in the New Testament. The Greek phrase is "*ten exanastasin ten ek nekron*" suggests a resurrection out from a group not resurrected. Is Paul indicating that he was thinking of a resurrection from among those who were dead? If so, this understanding of "*exanastasin*" would point to the resurrection of believers from among the unbelieving dead. Could Paul be referring to the Rapture?

However, the Rapture is not an event that believers need to strive to attain. All believers, living and dead, will be caught up when it occurs. It is most likely that Paul meant that he hoped he would live to experience the Rapture, the "out-resurrection from among the dead," before he died. The verb *katavtao* ("attain") means to come to, to arrive at, or to attain to something. It appears, from Paul's language here, that Paul expected that the Rapture could happen before he died (1 Thess. 4:16-17).

3:12 - Paul makes it clear that he has not obtained the intimate and personal knowledge of Christ and the power of His resurrection that he would like. He also did not want his readers to understand him as saying that his conversion had brought him into the intimate personal relationship with Christ that he desired. At his conversion his views about what is important in life changed drastically, yet he did not believe he was 'perfect.' Paul uses the analogy of a runner to describe the pursuit and goal of becoming Christlike; which we know as sanctification. Sanctification does not come automatically by faith like justification and glorification do, it is something we must pursue by diligently following the Lord (vv. 13-15; cf. Gal. 5:16; 2 Pet. 1:5-11). Paul stated that he was pursuing (pressing on, engaging in aggressive energetic action) Christlikeness like a runner pursues the finish line in a race. Paul pursued that for which Christ Jesus took hold of him – meaning Christ chose Paul for the purpose of conforming him to His image / likeness. Paul was determined to press on toward the goal of being Christlike. Note Paul's pursuit to his goal to be Christlike: 1) "that I may gain" (v. 8); 2) "that I may know" (v. 10); 3) "that I may attain" (v. 11); and 4) "that I may lay hold of" (v. 12). Pressing forward to becoming more Christlike is a mark of growing, vital believer.

3:13 – Paul, having expressed his pursuit to be Christlike, now clearly states that he has not achieved his goal to be Christlike, but it is the one thing he is determined to do. He viewed his pursuit of Christlikeness in the way that a runner looks at a race. He was not looking back ("forgetting what lies behind"). He was "forgetting" past heritage, attainments, and sin. Now he was pursuing a new goal ("reaching forward to what lies ahead") which is the personal intimate knowledge of Christ – becoming Christlike.

3:14 – Paul sets a "goal" (Gr. *skopos*, meaning a goal marker, the object at the end of the course on which the runner focuses his attention) for his life of obtaining complete knowledge of Christ. Paul's achievement of that goal, the "prize," would occur when he entered the Lord's presence and saw Him face to face (1 John 3:2-3). The "prize" would come at the end of his pursuit of his goal, meaning at the end of his life, but not before then. Therefore "the prize of the upward call" is a reference to ultimate salvation and Christlikeness which occurs in God's presence in heaven.

Gerald Hawthorne in his book Philippians explains the imagery of the "prize of the upward call:" "In keeping with the vivid imagery drawn from the Greek games that pervades this section there is still another explanation of the 'upward call' that seems the most reasonable explanation of all. It sees in the expression tes ano kleseos ["the upward call"] an allusion to the fact that the Olympian games, which included foot-races, were organized and presided over by agonothetes, highly respected officers called Hellenodikai. 'After each event they had a herald announce the name of the victor, his father's name and his country, and the athlete or charioteer would come and receive a palm branch at their hands' (G. Glotz, 'Hellenodikai,' in C. Daremberg and E. Saglio [eds.], Dictionnaire des antiqués grecques et romaines [Paris: Hachette, 1900-1963] 3,1,60-64). This is the call to which Paul is now alluding (Collange)."

Paul was pursuing a complete knowledge of Christ while he was living on the earth. He pursued, worked hard, ran diligently each day because he wanted to get to know the Lord as well as possible before going into the His presence, where he would: 1) receive rewards at the Judgment Seat of Christ (II Cor. 5:10), 2) see Christ face-to-face (I John 3:2-3), and 3) become like Christ (I John 3:2-3). *How are we doing in our daily walk in Christ? Are we pursuing Christlikeness? Are we as focused and diligent in our quest to be Christlike as Paul was in his life?*

3:15 - Paul now urges those who were mature ("perfect") among the Philippians to recognize that what he had said was true ("have this mind/attitude"; i.e., Christ's attitude). Paul's challenge to the believers could be understood as 'if you are mature (perfect), you realize that you are not yet mature (perfect).'

Paul desired that they have an attitude of pursuing the prize of Christlikeness. He wanted them to share his desire and ambition to be spiritually mature. Paul did not want the Philippian believers to dwell in the past ("if in anything you think otherwise"). He stated that God would enlighten those who thought differently ("will reveal that also"), if their "attitude" was right. In other words, Paul was telling the believers that if they continued to dwell in the past, not pursuing Christlikeness each day, God would reveal to them their need to pursue Christlikeness.

3:16 – Paul exhorts the Philippian believers that they live up to what they already had attained, which is righteousness in Christ. The greatest need among believers is to live up to what they already have in Christ. Most believers live far below their exalted position in Christ. Paul wanted them to "walk in line" (meaning 'stay in line spiritually / faithfully maintain a consistent spiritual life / moving forward with unity') and keep progressing toward Christlikeness; all the time recognizing that here on earth perfection in Christ will not be achieved until we see Him (I John 3:2-3). We should not wait until we have a complete knowledge of Christ to put into practice what we do understand from God's Word.

3:17 - *This verse is transitional. It applies equally well to what proceeds and to what follows. It begins with Paul calling the Philippians to follow his example.*

Paul calls on the Philippian believers to follow his example (to imitate him) in his relentless pursuit of Christlikeness. Paul was not alone in this pursuit, there were others (Timothy, Epaphroditus) who were pursuing Christlikeness and he was encouraging the believers to follow their example as well.

3:18 - Paul tells the Philippian believers that there were threats to their pursuit of Christlikeness. There were enemies of the cross of Christ because what they taught was contrary to the spirit of obedience to God that had led Jesus *to the cross* (cf. v. 10); the Jewish Judaizers who advocated living by the Law and the Gentile Libertines who advocated living free from any law. Paul warns the believers and weeps for them because of these false teachers who were among them leading them astray.

3:19 - Paul warns that these false teachers, who may have been a part of the Philippian church, are destined for destruction because of their false teaching. 'Destruction' here means destruction in a general sense, but it probably refers to unbelievers and eternal destruction in hell. Paul describes the characteristics of the false teachers: 1) they give free rein to the satisfaction of their sensual "appetite[s]" and do not restrain the flesh (cf. Rom. 16:18; 1 Cor. 6:13; Jude 11); 2) they find satisfaction and take pride in things that they do that should cause them "shame" (cf. Eph. 5:12); 3) they involve themselves almost totally in physical and material ("earthly") "things," things pertaining to the present enjoyment of life, to the exclusion of spiritual matters. These false teachers had made themselves and their pursuit of satisfying their desires the god of their lives. They had become idolaters worshipping themselves and their base desires. Their self-indulgence had turned liberty into license. Their view of faith and grace was perverted in such a way to allow them to live a life of undisciplined self-indulgence.

The undisciplined self-indulgence Paul describes in this verse is known as antinomianism. A person who holds antinomian beliefs is a person who believes they are released by grace from obedience to moral laws established by the Word of God. They have turned liberty in Christ into a license to sin. They have made their own physical desires their god and their minds are only on earthly things. They often glory in doing things they should be ashamed of. It has been correctly stated, "A man's god is that to which he gives himself."

The example of Paul, Timothy and Epaphroditus should encourage us to make Jesus Christ the focus of our lives. Paul had one clearly defined goal in relation to Christ: to get to know his Savior better and better. This should be our goal in life as well. It should be noted that the exhortation of Paul in Philippians 3:12-19 is an exhortation against the view that grace releases the believer from obedience to the commands of Christ; that salvation frees a person to do what they want. We see evidence in the lives of believers that they have perverted their liberty in Christ into license to sin. Paul's exhortation in Philippians 3:12-19 is a direct counter to such antinomian beliefs.

3:20 - Paul now focuses his exhortation on citizenship; something the Philippian believers were very sensitive to. The Philippians lived as colonists outside of Italy, yet their citizenship was in Rome; they were considered a citizen of Italy. A believer lives on earth outside of heaven, but their citizenship is in heaven; each believer is a citizen of heaven. An undisciplined, self-indulgent person sees only earth and life here, whereas a believer recognizes their life here is to be focused on being Christlike, looking for His appearing or their going to see Him. It is upon the basis of our heaven citizenship that a believer looks with anticipation to the return of Christ. The Greek word *apekdechometha*, translated "look for," is a strong compound that emphasizes the intense yearning of Paul for the LORD's return. Today the expectation of the Lord's personal and imminent return should give us joy and a desire to be Christlike as one of our greatest incentives to be Christlike is that we might be ready for Him when He returns.

3:21 - When Christ returns, He will transform (change the outward form of) our mortal, lowly bodies so that they will be in like (identical in essential character) His glorious resurrected body. The comparison between these two bodies is striking. One is of a "humble state": lowly, weak, and susceptible to all kinds of evil influences. The other one, the new body, will be glorious, more expressive of our true state as the children of God, and incorruptible. Every believer will receive a glorified body like Christ's. This transformation will occur whether we are alive or dead when the Lord returns (1 Cor. 15:51-54; 1 Thess. 5:9-10). This transformation is a demonstration of Christ's power over all natural laws; it is the same divine "power" by which God will eventually "subject everything (all things)" in the universe "to Himself."

4:1 - Paul now draws a conclusion to his exhortation with the word – “therefore”- tying in what he had written in chapter 3. Paul reveals his affection for the Philippian believers by calling them “brothers” and “dear friends”. He said he "longed to see" them, using an expression that does not appear anywhere else in the New Testament. Paul's affection was expressed by his use of the terms “my joy and crown”. The Philippian believers were to Paul what the victory laurel wreath was to the winner of a race in the Greek games. Paul exhorts the Philippian believers to “stand fast”, which is a military command to a soldier who is standing at his post. Standing firm (cf. Eph. 6:13) involves living in harmony with one another (4:2-3), rejoicing on all occasions (4:4-7), and developing a proper attitude (4:8-9). Paul's desire was for the Philippian believer to stand firm in the Lord, even in turbulent times. Paul did not want the Philippian believers to lose their balance and tumble spiritually because of bad influences of the Judaizers and antinomians in their midst. Instead, he wanted them to adopt the mind of Christ, as he himself had, and thus be qualified to continue on with him in the partnership of the gospel.

4:2 - Paul then ‘implored’ (meaning ‘appealed to, called for’) Euodia (meaning ‘prosperous journey’) and Syntyche (meaning ‘pleasant acquaintance’) to agree with each other in the Lord. It is very possible that Euodia and Syntyche were among the first believers in Philippi who labored with Paul in his ministry of spreading and contending for the gospel (cf. Acts 16:11-15). But now instead of helping the church at Philippi they were causing dissension in the church, which was hindering the ministry of the gospel. Paul did not reveal the reason for the estrangement that existed between these two women. Regardless of the reason, the will of God for them was to establish a harmonious relationship ("live in harmony"). Unanimity in the church is not always possible, but unity is. It appears that Paul thought that they would respond to gentle persuasion. The addition of "in the Lord" would remind them that they were under His authority, and that they had much in common as sisters in Christ.

4:3 - Paul next addresses a “true companion” (a ‘loyal yokefellow’) to help Euodia and Syntyche to come to an agreement with one another, bringing them back to fellowship with each other. He also asked Clement and other fellow workers, those who were listed in the Book of Life, to help in the cause of uniting them – that they become of the same mind. The Bible refers to the Book of Life as 1) the book containing the names of people presently alive (Exod. 32:32-33; Ps. 69:28), and 2) the book containing the names of God's elect (i.e., all believers; Luke 10:20; Rev. 3:5; 13:8; 17:8; 20:12, 15; 21:27) and 3) the names of faithful believers (Phil. 4:3).

4:4 - Paul now exhorts the believers to rejoice in the Lord - - twice. Paul desired that the Philippian believers have an attitude of joy in the Lord, in spite of the circumstances they faced. He must have felt that there was a great need for this attitude in Philippi. There were a number of reasons why the Philippian believers could have felt discouraged: 1) Paul's imprisonment and the possibility of his death; 2) Epaphroditus' illness, 3) antagonism and persecution of unbelievers; 4) Judaizer's false teaching; 5) antinomian libertine's false teaching; and 6) internal factions and discord within the church among believers. To counteract this attitude, Paul exhorted them to “rejoice in the Lord always,” and he repeated this exhortation again to place emphasis on his admonition, "Again I will say, rejoice." There are many circumstances which believers find themselves in

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that do not make them happy, but even then they can always rejoice in the Lord. Paul had set a good example of this rejoicing by singing when he was in prison in Philippi (Acts 16:25).

4:5 - In addition to joy, Paul exhorts the believers in Philippi to have and exhibit gentleness (a non-retaliatory spirit) to all men. Paul's exhortation is for believers to visibly and publicly demonstrate a "gentle spirit" (Gr. *epieikes*), to everyone, saved and unsaved alike. The Greek word contains connotations of gentleness, yielding, kindness, patience, forbearance, leniency, and magnanimity. This "gentleness" is a reflection of Jesus Christ's humility in 2:5-11 that we are to have. A humble, gentle person does not insist on his or her own rights or privileges. He or she is considerate and gentle toward others. Of course, there is a time to stand for what is right. The humble, gentle person is not spineless but selfless; they are the exact opposite of a prideful person where the spirit of contention and self-seeking is demonstrated, as noted in 4:2. Joy may not always be seen by others, but our reaction to others is always seen by others. A believer's contentment with themselves and generosity to others, even when the faults and failures of others are causing them problems, will be noticed.

Why the need to be gentle so others will notice? Because the Lord is near – both in presence and in return. Christ observes our life and all that we do is recorded, as we are accountable to Him for time and choice in our life. But Paul's note – "the Lord is at hand" – is also a reference to his imminent coming again (cf. 3:11). Ronald E. Showers stated in his book '*Maranatha: Our Lord Come! A Definitive Study of the Rapture of the Church*', "In light of the concept of the imminent coming of Christ and the fact that the New Testament does teach His imminent coming, we can conclude that the Pretribulation Rapture view is the only view of the Rapture of the church that comfortably fits the New Testament teaching of the imminent coming of Christ. It is the only view that can honestly say that Christ could return at any moment, because it alone teaches that Christ will come to rapture the church before the 70th week of Daniel 9 or the Tribulation period begins and that nothing else must happen before His return."

4:6 - Paul continues with the thought of the Lord being near when he exhorts the Philippians not to be anxious about anything. Paul's exhortation may be a reaction to those in the Philippians church that were worrying to the point of being fretful and distraught over a situation or circumstance (cf. 4:4 note). Paul did not want them to worry or fret. Worry and fret in a believer is a strong indication that the believer does not trust God and His wisdom, sovereignty and power. Christ warned against worry and fret because it clearly shows a lack of trust in God (Matt. 6:25-33).

Paul exhorts the Philippian believer to prayer instead of worry. Prayer involves trusting; it is the believer's approach and access to God. Paul uses several different words for prayer here: 1) "Prayer" (*proseuche*) is the believer's approach of communicating with God; 2) "Supplication / petition" (*deesis*) refers to requests for an answer to a specific need; 3) "Thanksgiving" (*eucharistias*) is grateful attitude of the heart in acknowledging God's mercy and grace during prayer; and 4) "Requests" (*aitemata*) refers to individual, specific requests (definite things asked for) of God. Paul exhorts them to pray and petition with thanksgiving; which implies complete trust in God. Paul's exhortation here is a strong encourage to seek freedom from anxiety through prayer.

J. Vernon McGee quoted Fenelon, a mystic who lived in the Middle Ages, who encouraged praying as follows: "Tell God all that is in your heart, as one unloads one's heart, its pleasures and its pains, to a dear friend. Tell Him your troubles, that He may comfort you; tell Him your joys, that He may sober them; tell Him your longings, that He may purify them; tell Him your dislikes, that He may help you to conquer them; talk to Him of your temptations, that He may shield you from them; show Him the wounds of your heart, that He may heal them; lay bare your indifference to good, your depraved tastes for evil, your instability. Tell Him how self-

love makes you unjust to others, how vanity tempts you to be insincere, how pride disguises you to yourself as to others."

Howard Hendricks, his book "Color Outside the Lines: A Revolutionary Approach to Creative Leadership" called verses 2-6 of Philippians 4: "... a five-part recipe for conflict resolution: (1) 'Rejoice in the Lord,' that is, get beyond yourselves and look to the Lord. (2) 'Let your gentleness be evident to all.' In other words speak with kindness to each other. (3) 'Do not be anxious.' Relax, and give it all to God. (4) 'Be thankful.' The simple act of expressing gratitude for our blessings takes the heat out of infection. (5) Present your requests to God. Prayer realigns us and restores peace ..."

4:7 - Paul, based on experience, tells them that when they do not worry but rather completely trust in God when they pray, petition, and request specific things – God will give peace. This peace (meaning “a release of tension”) God gives transcends all human understanding – it is beyond man’s ability to comprehend. The phrase "the peace of God" occurs nowhere else in the New Testament. This is peace that comes *from* God, rather than peace *with* God.

This peace given by God will guard (keep watch over, to protect by guarding) the believer’s heart and mind...and it will keep the believer from anxiety, fear, and doubt. This peace from God has its source in the Lord Jesus Christ as Sovereign. He is the source of the believer’s peace because of His act of reconciliation between God and man – His payment for our sin by His death on the cross for us.

Most of us have experienced some, or even much, lack of complete peace, from time to time, when we pray. Paul was not saying that we will feel absolutely at ease and relieved after we pray. This verse does not promise peace as the indicator of God's will when we are praying about what we should do. But through prayer we should have peace that comes that we have laid the matter before the Lord and sought His aid. Also, Paul did not say here that if we need to make a decision, God will make His will known to us by giving us peace about the right choice. The promise of this verse is that if we pray, rather than worry, God will give us peace. Anxiety brings no peace, but praying does.

4:8 - Paul closes his exhortation with the word – “finally”, which is a reference and tie in to his previous teaching. Paul focuses his exhortation on the thought life of the believer. One of the greatest areas for sin in the believer’s life is in their mind and thoughts. It is from the mind (Rom. 12:1-2) and heart (Prov. 4:23) that the issues of life come. Paul mentions six objects of thought that should be the focus of the thought life of a believer. Each object of thought is introduced by the word – “whatever”, which in the Greek is plural – meaning several things could be included in each object of thought mentioned. The thought life of a believer is to be focused on these objects of thought – “whatever” is:

- 1) True (*alethe*) – What is valid, honest, reliable, genuine and sincere (cf. Rom. 3:4; Prov. 8:7). It is the opposite of dishonest, unreliable; it is not to be concealing.
- 2) Noble / Honorable (*semna*) – What is dignified and worthy of respect; admirable in dignity and respect (cf. I Tim. 3:1–13).
- 3) Right / Just (*dikaia*) – What is conforming to and in harmony with God’s standards; in accordance to what is good and proper; in conformity with fact; upright.
- 4) Pure (*hagna*) – What is morally pure and wholesome; free from contamination, cleanness, unmodified.
- 5) Lovely (*prospBILE*) – What promotes peace rather than conflict; what is pleasing and amiable; delightful, pleasing, of great moral beauty.

- 6) Admirable / Good report (*euphema*) – What is positive, constructive; praiseworthy because it measures up to the highest standards; highly regarded and well thought of; not negative or destructive; inspiring approval or reverence.

Paul ends this narrative with a rhetorical phrase “if there,” meaning he was placing the responsibility on the individual to make their own decision about their thought life. The six objects of thought Paul highlighted are described as being excellent and praiseworthy. Paul was challenging the believers to meditate on these things, which implies that they were thinking of other things that were distracting from or destroying the ministry of the gospel....and the unity of the church. Dwight D. Pentecost in his book *The Joy of Living: A Study in Philippians* stated: “On the authority of the Word of God, I submit to you that the greatest conflict being waged is not international, not political, not economic, and not social. The greatest conflict taking place in the world today is the battle for control of our minds.” It has been correctly stated that we, as individuals, are responsible for our thoughts because no one forces us to think what we think, you choose what you think.

4:9 - Paul now challenges the Philippian believers to live as he lived. The objects of thought outlined in v.8 were taught by Paul to the Philippian believers. The Philippians had "learned and received" lessons from Paul. They also had personally "heard" his verbal instructions "and seen" his life in light of those lessons and instructions. Paul knew that the Philippian believers knew him so he could ask them to follow his life example. They needed to put these "things" into "practice," not just think about them and discuss them.

Paul encouraged them to follow his teaching (as given in Philippians 4:4-8) because God would be with them if they followed his teaching and they would have the peace of God in their lives. Paul spoke from experience and knew this to be true. Paul had exhorted the Philippians to engage in five things; 1) rejoice in Christ always, 2) be forbearing with all people, 3) pray about difficult situations, 4) think correctly and wholesomely, and 5) practice what they had been taught. These are fundamental principles are God's will for all of us who are believers, which must be shown by actions not words. These principles are vitally important in becoming Christlike in our life and being an example to others. Submission to these principles is important to maintaining peace in the local church so the gospel of Christ will go forward effectively, even in the face of opposition.

Philippians 4:10-20 (Philippian’s concern). (Epilogue)

4:10 - Paul moves forward here to express his thankfulness for the gift that was given to him. Paul was happy to receive the financial gift from the Philippians and he rejoiced in the Lord for the gift and provision given to him. Paul had received a gift from the Philippians 10 years earlier while he was ministering in Thessalonica. Paul understood that the Philippians had a desire to help him since Thessalonica but he had not had a need. But now that he was imprisoned in Rome, he was in need and the Philippian church responded to his need; the Philippian church had revived their support for Paul in a real, tangible way and he was thankful.

4:11 - Paul did not want the Philippians to misunderstand him. He was not rejoicing primarily because their gift had met his need, but because their gift expressed their love and concern for him. Paul went on to state that he had no real need. He had learned the lesson of contentment and was able to rejoice regardless of his circumstances. Paul’s contentment indicates an independence from any need for help, which he had because of his complete trust in God’s ability to meet his need, whatever his circumstance.

4:12 - Specifically, Paul was equally content with little or with much, materially, because he was *rich spiritually*. Both poverty and wealth bring temptations with them (Prov. 30:7-9). Paul had learned how to handle; 1) abasement (little), 2) prosperity (abundance), 3) full (well fed), 4) hungry, 5) plenty (abundance) and 6) need

(lack) in every individual situation (*en panti*), and in all types of situations (*en pasin*). Paul knew how to live in poverty as well as with wealth. Paul states that he has learned the secret (a technical term that means “to initiate into the mysteries”) in being content in all circumstances and situations – he rested in the LORD to meet his needs.

John Wesley is reported to have said that he did not know which dishonored God the most—to doubt His love and care, or to curse and swear. Most believers are careful in their speech, yet many believers have no sense of the wrong they fret and worry about material things.

4:13 - Paul concludes his thoughts on contentment by stating that he can do (meaning ‘to be strong; to have strength’) all things (meaning ‘living in need or in abundance’) through Christ. Paul’s contentment did not come through will power or the power of positive thinking. It came through Jesus Christ who enabled him to be content. Christ strengthened (meaning ‘to put power into’) Paul. Paul had explained earlier that the most important thing in life was to center on Christ (2:7-11). Contentment is a fruit of doing that. Christ sustained Paul until he received what he needed. Christ’s strength is provided to the believer until: 1) the need is met, 2) the need is taken away, or 3) the believer is called home to be with Christ (Phil. 1:21).

4:14 - Although Paul was content, he was grateful for the help the Philippians had sent to him. Paul hastened to add that it was good of them to send it ("you have done well to share"). He appreciated it more because it showed a proper spirit in the givers than because it eased his discomfort (v. 18). He wanted to dispel any doubts that the Philippians may have had about the genuineness of his gratitude for the gift he had received from them. By their giving to him the Philippians were sharing in his ministry. They had shared in his ministry from the very beginning of their Christian experience; from the time Paul began his ministry in Philippi through his ministry in Thessalonica (as they gave to him twice while he was there).

John Brug in his article “The Principles of Financial Stewardship in Paul’s Letter to the Philippians” wrote: “We know that God loves a cheerful giver, but I believe we also need to stress that God loves a cheerful receiver. Cheerful receivers make giving and receiving a joy. It is especially important that the called workers of the church learn to be gracious, cheerful receivers. This is not necessarily an easy task. The art of being a gracious, cheerful, thankful receiver may be even more difficult than being a cheerful giver. If we learn to accept the compliments and the special personal gifts which we receive in a gracious, cheerful manner, we will help make giving and receiving a joy for ourselves and for our people.”

4:15 - Paul commends the Philippians for their help and partnership (“shared with me”) in his ministry of ‘sharing’ the gospel with Gentiles. No other church had partnered with Paul like the Philippian church. Paul also gave an account for what was given to him. The term “giving and receiving” refers to an accounting of receipts and expenditures.

4:16 – After Paul had started the church in Philippi, he had traveled south from Philippi into the province of Achaia headed for Corinth. Even before Paul arrived in Corinth, the Philippians had sent him gifts "in Thessalonica," the next town he visited after leaving Philippi (Acts 17:1). Paul may also have been referring to the gift he received in Corinth as he mentioned in 2 Corinthians 11:8.

4:17 - However, the most important thing to Paul was not the gifts themselves. It was the spiritual reward that would come to the Philippians ("the profit which increases to your account")—because of their financial investments in his ministry. Paul was content, not looking for a gift, but he wanted to make sure that credit was given to the account of the Philippian givers. The gifts they were giving to Paul were accruing dividends to

their spiritual account. Paul had received full payment from the Philippians so he was abounding and was amply supplied.

Note: Paul uses business terminology in verses 15 through 18 (“giving and receiving,” “credit/abound to your account,” “having received...in full”), which indicates that Paul was very knowledgeable in business matters. His writings reveal a consistent concern over good investments, which he regarded mainly as investments yielding eternal rewards.

4:18 - Paul felt fully satisfied. He had received the Philippians' recent gift "in full." This acknowledgment was his written receipt for their donation, as well as a "thank-you note. The gift from the Philippians, delivered to him by Epaphroditus, was to Paul and to God a gift that was a fragrant offering; an acceptable sacrifice that was pleasing to God. The term “fragrant offering / sweet-smelling aroma” is an O.T. term that described an offering that was pleasing to God.

4:19 - Paul closes with a promise that “God shall supply all your need” (cf. Prov. 11:25; Matt. 5:7; 6:33). Paul is telling the Philippians that God would meet all their needs because they had sacrificed and gave to meet Paul’s needs. Paul encouraged the Philippians by telling them that not only would God bless them out of His bounty but also in accordance to with His bounty; meaning God would give increase in proportion to His resources, not just a small amount out of His riches. Note that the "supply" of our needs comes through "Christ Jesus." They come through His sovereign control, through His vast resources, through His infinite wisdom, through His loving heart, and through our union with Him.

Dr. Constable wrote “Why do so many Christians suffer—due to lack of food, clothing, or money—in view of this promise? Perhaps it is because some of our greatest needs are not material. To meet these needs, God sometimes does not make us rich, or even financially comfortable. Remember, too, that God gave this promise to generous and sacrificial givers. We may be able to think of examples that appear to be exceptions to this promise. However, I believe that if we could see things from God's perspective, we would realize that God has been completely faithful to His Word.”

4:20 - Paul formally closes this epilogue (v.10-20) with a doxology (words of praise to God) that praises God for His providential care. Paul is praising God because of the evidence and expression of the truth that God supplies all the needs of the believer. This is Paul’s praise to the character of God and His faithfulness.

William Dalton in his article ‘The Integrity of Philippians’ identified four elements common in both the prologue (1:3-26) and the epilogue (4:10-20): “... we seem to have evidence of an inclusion which binds the whole letter into one unit. First of all, the idea of partnership is strongly expressed at the beginning and the end. Thus in 1:5 Paul is ‘thankful for your partnership (koinonia) in the gospel’; and in 4:15 he records that ‘no church entered into partnership in giving and receiving except you only.’ This partnership is reiterated in another parallel: in 1:7 the Philippians are sharers (sugkoinonous) of grace with Paul; in 4:13 [sic 4:14] they are sharers (sugkoinonesantes) with him in his trouble. At both beginning and end we have the same idea expressed in different ways: the long-standing partnership of the Philippians with Paul: ‘from the first day until now’ (1:5), and ‘in the beginning of the gospel’ (4:15). And finally the reciprocal attitude of sympathy between Paul and the Philippians is expressed in the same phrase; in 1:7 he says ‘it is right for me to feel this about you’ (touto phronein huper panton humon), and in 4:10, ‘You have revived your concern for me’ (to huper emoi phronein).” Paul’s return to these ideas in the epilogue ties the book together and gives it unity.

Dr. Constable wrote: "We cannot read this epilogue (vv. 10-20) thoughtfully without appreciating the Apostle Paul's sensitivity to his Philippian readers. He was careful to balance what he said. He wanted them to understand his genuine gratitude for their gifts, on the one hand, and his contentment with whatever God sent his way on the other. In our day, we tend to go to one of these extremes or the other in dealing with those who give us gifts. We may give these people the impression that we do not appreciate their gift, or we may lead them to conclude that we are greedy. A proper balance must rest on genuine contentment, and should communicate both appreciation and faith."

Philippians 4:21-23 (Salutation).

Paul concludes this warm, positive epistle with some greetings and a final benediction. He did this to cement good relations with the Philippians, and to point them again, in closing, to the Lord Jesus Christ. This closing section of the epistle balances out the salutation that opened it (1:1-2).

4:21-22 - Paul closes his letter to the Philippians with an encouragement that they would pass his greeting to every believer that they came in contact with. He used the same phrase in his opening greeting: "saints in Christ Jesus" (1:1). Being "in Christ" is an important theme in Philippians. Paul also forwards a greeting to the Philippian believers from all the believers who were with him in Rome. The "brethren" who were "with" Paul in Rome included Epaphroditus, and probably Timothy.

Paul calls out special attention to the believers in Rome; "All the saints" is a reference to the Christians in Rome. Paul wanted the Philippian believers to know that his imprisonment had resulted in a number of individuals associated with Caesar ("those of Caesar's household"), either those who worked for Caesar or who were relatives of Caesar, had come to know Jesus Christ as their personal Savior. Paul had already referred to the praetorian guards, some of whom had become believers (1:13). Since Philippi as a colony had close ties with Rome, it is likely that some of the Roman Christians had friends in the Philippian church.

4:23 - Paul closes his letter by giving great prominence to Christ's marvelous grace; for it is through the grace of the Lord Jesus Christ that true contentment and peace comes in life. Paul's benediction is similar to his initial greeting (1:2; cf. Phil. 25; Gal. 6:18). God's bestowal of the unmerited favor (grace) and supernatural enablement (power) of the Lord Jesus Christ upon the Philippians would enable them to succeed. God's "grace" would enable them to do all that Paul had exhorted them to do in this letter, which is true and applicable to us today in our churches.

Paul's message in this letter to the Philippians centered on becoming Christlike in our lives. In chapters 2 and 3, Paul described what it means to adopt the mind of Christ, first using Christ's example of sacrificial self-emptying and servanthood, and then by his own personal testimony and example, the practical outworking of that servant attitude. The great burden of this letter is that we who are believers need to make His attitude our own, so we can join with other believers in partnership in the gospel. The Philippians' partnership with Paul is still bearing fruit today through this encouraging letter to the Philippians that Paul wrote. Gordon Fee in his New International Commentary on Philippians wrote: "The truly godly person both longs for God's presence, where one pours out his or her heart to God in joy, prayer, and thanksgiving, and lives in God's presence by 'doing' the righteousness of God. Otherwise piety is merely religion, not devotion."

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