



"Finding Joy In The Midst Of An Unhappy World"
"A Bible Commentary On The Book Of Philippians"
"Effective Expositions For Life"

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Introduction

Hello folks! Thank you for taking the time to read this new Bible Commentary on the Book of Philippians. My hero, Paul the Apostle, wrote the letter to the Philippians, and with the help of Jesus, I wrote this commentary. When Paul wrote this epistle to the Philippian believers, he was probably in a Roman prison. We don't know for sure if it was his first Roman imprisonment, or if it was his second one just before he was martyred by Nero for his Christian faith. Regardless of whether it was his first or second imprisonment, we do know that for him to write this letter from a Roman prison was an astonishing thing. Paul was in prison suffering many things, and yet, he wrote about the joy that could be found, even in an unhappy world. He didn't know what was going to happen, and neither do we, except we know that things are going to get worse and worse, and then the rapture of the church will take place and then starts the horrible time of Great Tribulation under the reign of the Anti-Christ. We don't know for sure when Jesus will come for His people, but we do know that it will be very soon. It could even be today!

At the time of this writing, I am 69 years old, and I have been preaching the Gospel for over 51 years. During these 51 years of ministry, I have never seen what I am witnessing first hand in the world, especially here in America. Our country is totally out of control with wicked leaders, diabolical perverts walking our streets and trying to cram their perversion down our throats pretending that their sin is just normal. And then, there are multitudes of young people that have become anti-God due to the brainwashing of college and university professors. In addition to this, we have insecurity everywhere because of violent crime and terrorist threats all around us. And, we have had a President, Barak Obama, for the past eight years who has done more to cause racial prejudice and division in our land worse than anyone since the civil war. We are truly in a time of dismal despair and a time of seeming hopelessness for millions of people. Yet, we know that God is still on the throne and that He is not up in heaven wringing His hands and worried about what is going to happen. He has everything under control, and we can truly rejoice in this unhappy world if we learn the secrets that Paul the Apostle demonstrated while in the Roman prison. Therefore, this is what this Book of Philippians is all about. It is about learning how to rejoice in this very unhappy and turbulent world in which we live. It is truly my prayer that each of you studying the Book of Philippians, accompanied by this commentary, will come out of your study with a new commitment to rejoice in the Lord regardless of how bad things are around you.

Before moving on to our study, let me just mention that the photo on the front of this book was taken recently while JoAnne and I were on another trip to Kenya. We love Africa, and on this day after a delightful dinner, we felt a lot of happiness because we had been seeing a lot of people get saved through our prison and school evangelism. The greatest joy that any believer can ever find, second only to getting saved, is to be a part of telling other people how to come to Christ, and then watch them accept Him by faith as well. During this recent trip, we were privileged to witness over 3,100 people pray to receive Christ as their personal Savior during just three weeks in Kenya and Uganda. We are still praising God for this great harvest of souls.

In the King's service,

Dr. Stan Frye
GIMI

"Paul's Confidence In The Midst Of Suffering"

Scripture: Philippians 1:1-30

I. NOTICE PAUL'S SALUTATION. vs. 1-2

A. Notice the servants in this salutation. v. 1a

As we begin our study of chapter one, let me just remind you that Paul was in prison in Rome when he wrote this letter to the Philippians, and he begins with a greeting as most all letters are started, and he tells the Philippians that he is writing on behalf of himself and his friend, Timothy, who obviously was with him at this time. Please remember that Timothy was a convert of Paul, and it is believed that he succeeded Paul as the pastor of the church at Ephesus after Paul left there following his three-year ministry. Paul tells the people that he and Timothy are servants of the Lord Jesus Christ. And folks, as I have stated so many times down through my years of service, there is no greater characteristic of a child of God than to be a servant, first of all of Christ, and then serving others as Christ lives and works in us. Please remember what Jesus said about servant-hood in **Matthew 20:26-28**, "**But it shall not be so among you: but whosoever will be great among you, let him be your minister: And whosoever will be chief among you, let him be your servant: Even as the Son of Man came not to be ministered unto, but to minister, and to give his life a ransom for many.**" In other words, we are never more like Jesus than when we are serving Him and others. What a gracious joy it is to be able to serve the One Who died for our sins, but also, to serve those who have been redeemed by the sacrificial blood of Jesus that was shed to purchase our servant-hood. This statement by Paul as he began this epistle reveals to us his and Timothy's humility.

B. Notice the saints in the salutation. v. 1b

The second thing we see in verse one of this text is that Paul greets the people at Philippi and calls them all saints, and then declares that the common denominator for all of these saints is that they are in Christ Jesus. In other words, they had been saved and sanctified by Christ as He set them aside for Himself. Therefore, they no longer belonged to themselves, but they now were the purchased possession of our Lord Jesus. This saintly position started at the moment of salvation, and then would continue progressively for the rest of their lives here on earth. As believers, we need to really get to know the doctrine of progressive sanctification. The word sanctify means that God has set us apart for Himself, and He will make us more and more holy as we surrender more and more of our lives to Him.

I do want to really affirm this truth at this time because there is so much false doctrine being taught about instantaneous sanctification which has erroneously been called the baptism of the Holy Spirit. At the moment of our salvation, we are baptized into the body of Christ in and through the Holy

Spirit, and this is not a second work of grace as many people falsely teach today. You can study this in **Romans 6:1-10**, and when you do, you will find a tremendous amount of truth about sainthood. I assure you that we do not have to wait until we die in order to be recognized as saints like the Catholic Church teaches. This is truly a false doctrine about sainthood as well.

So, we must conclude that Paul considered the Philippian Christians great saints of the Lord, and he is showing them great respect by this title. And just maybe, he is telling them this so that they will act like saints while going through so much trouble and suffering.

C. Notice the superintendents in the salutation. v. 1c

This first verse concludes with Paul greeting the bishops (overseers) and the deacons of the Philippian church. He intentionally sends them a personal word of salutation as the leaders of the church. Again, I believe he is doing this to show respect for these leaders, and to remind them of their responsibilities. And, I must tell you that it is a tremendous responsibility to hold either of these two leadership roles. Also, we need to be reminded that the only two offices in the New Testament church was and is, the offices of the pastors and deacons. Many have tried to add many other positions and ordain people in other roles, but the only offices in the New Testament church were and still are those of the pastors and deacons.

D. Notice the sensitivity in this salutation. v. 2a

In the first part of verse two, Paul extends to the people a two-fold greeting. The one is grace which was the common Gentile greeting, and the other was peace, which was expressed by the Jews when they said shalom. So, Paul greeted those who were not Jews, and he also directed a special greeting to those who may have been from a Jewish background. And, I do want to tell you that although these two expressions of "grace and peace" were typical greetings in those days, Paul did send these greetings accompanied by the prayer that the people would receive a good deal of grace and a special kind of peace that can only come in and through Jesus Christ. These two expressions of grace and peace showed tremendous feelings or sensitivity for the people in Philippi. So, it is extremely important when we write letters or send e-mails in this modern world that we have feeling in our writing so that the recipients of the letters will sense that we do love them. I always try to do this every time I write a letter or e-mail, and I write over 2,000 letters and e-mails every year. I do pray that the people who receive my mail senses that I really do care for them, especially if they have demonstrated love and compassion for us and our great Gateway International Missions ministry. And, I especially try to show feeling and genuine thanksgiving when I respond to a person who has sent us a financial gift. I am not saying that Paul was being political as some of you might think, but he did desire to show his love and feelings for the people, even in the very first part of the letter.

E. Notice the Savior in this salutation. v. 2b

The last part of verse two is a directive giving the Philippians a true revelation of where their actual grace and peace is coming from. Paul tells them that God the Father is the Source of everything, and that all grace and peace comes from above. And to the Jewish believers, this would be a tremendous thought because the Jews revered God the Father and looked upon God as a child would look with appreciation to his or her father. Then, Paul tells the believers in Philippi that the Lord Jesus Christ is equal with God, and that He is the channel through which God so graciously grants this grace and peace. This would be especially meaningful to those who have been reconciled to God since Calvary. This salutation is a reminder to all of us that God the Father is indeed God, and so is His only begotten Son as well. So, this is a further revelation of the Godhead. The Philippian believers were being taught basic theology through this greeting from Paul the Apostle who had been the founder of the Philippian Church. And, this is a reminder for each of us in this dispensation that even the greetings of our letters should have a testimony to the Source of every blessing. Our greetings should not be just for protocol or etiquette, but they should be a means of drawing attention to our reliance upon God Who is the giver of every good and perfect gift.

II. NOTICE PAUL'S SATISFACTION. vs. 3-8

A. Paul is satisfied with the saint's faith. vs. 3-4

In verse three of this text, Paul expresses to the Philippian believers just how thankful he is for every mention of their names. Paul loved the believers at Philippi very much, and of course, they should have loved him because it was at Philippi where he and Silas were imprisoned for the proclamation of the Gospel. So, Paul had suffered much in planting the church there in Philippi. And, we must not forget that God had given Paul the great night vision from God in Troas (Acts 16), when God redirected his journey and brought him and Silas to the European continent. It was also at Philippi where Lydia, the first European convert was saved. So, the Philippian believers were near to Paul's heart, and he was dear to the people. Paul was truly satisfied with the great faith that the saints had demonstrated, and he was always very thankful for them every time he thought of their faithfulness. I can't help but feel the affinity between Paul and these parishioners when I read every word of the epistle.

I thank this would be a good time for me to stop to give a strong admonition to all of us who have been impacted by other people's lives down through the years. And, I say this because there are so many people that just seemingly forget those who have helped to mentor them in the ministry and also to train, encourage, and coach them as they have grown up in the Lord. I must tell you that it is truly a crying shame if any of us forget, fail to show appreciation, and fail to respect those who have been such a vital part of our growth in the Lord. Paul was not this way, and he let it be known that he would always remember those in Philippi who had been such a blessing to

him, and he would forever express his thanksgiving to God that He allowed these dear people to be a part of his life down through the years. We too, need to learn from the example Paul set for all of us as we try to serve Jesus and grow old faithfully. And, we must never forget to show respect for these dear ones who have been such a blessing to us; even if we have some disagreement with them in years to come. They readily deserve our love, our respect, and our deepest appreciation for the impact they have made on our lives. Folks, are there any saints who have impacted your lives down through the years? If so, don't you think it is time to contact them.

In verse four of this chapter, Paul tells the Philippian Christians that he is praying for them with joy in every prayer he prays because they mean so much to him. As I stated earlier, Paul sincerely loved the believers in Philippi and he wanted God to continue to bless them richly. So, every time he prayed, he interceded on their behalf to God almighty. Maybe this would be a good time for me to encourage you readers to take the time this week and write a letter or e-mail and express your gratitude to those who have been a blessing to you, or maybe you can just simply call them by phone and let them know how they have impacted your life. If you do this from the encouragement of this paragraph, then I will be truly blessed because you did this extremely kind endeavor. When we spend our time in showing appreciation, there will be little time for complaining or criticizing as we serve God together with others.

B. Paul is satisfied with the saints' fellowship. v. 5

In verse five, Paul continues his words of thanksgiving to the Philippian believers by telling them just how much he thanked God for the times of fellowship that he had experienced with them in the past from the first time he had met them, even until the day he wrote them this letter. Paul was so grateful for the tie that bound his heart with the believers in Philippi due to the common denominator of the indwelling Holy Spirit Who lives within every child of God.

In Dr. John Philip's Bible Commentary on Philippians, page 32, we find the following words about Paul's fellowship with the Christians at Philippi. "The Philippians had stood by Paul, supported him, and followed him with their prayers. They had become his partners in the Gospel. They had done for him what Jonathan had done for David—'strengthened his hand in God' (**I Samuel 23:16**). They had let him know: 'We are with you, Paul, all the way. You can count on us.' They had proved their friendship in a practical way with their financial support. The Philippians had ministered to him." Paul knew that he would never have survived his terrible prison experience and all of the other suffering in Philippi, were it not for the love and support of the believers in the church there. So, brother Paul, was extremely indebted to the Philippians; and he wanted them to know it.

C. Paul is satisfied with the saints' future. v. 6

In verse six, we find some wonderful words of encouragement from Paul the Apostle. He tells the Philippian believers that he will not only always cherish the times of fellowship that he had had with them, but that he has a tremendous confidence in their future because he knows that without a doubt, they will finish well. He tells these children of God that the God Who had begun a good work in them would grow them and perfect the work until Jesus returns again for all of us. Paul was so positive about the future that the Philippians would have because they had been faithful in the past, and the same Lord that had brought excellence in their lives, would continue to finish the work He had started.

Folks, can you see the tremendous confidence that Paul has for these followers of Christ? His confidence was based upon his belief in the Lord Jesus Christ, and thus, he believed that Jesus would continue to work in them until the day He returns to this world. In other words, Jesus had been the foundation upon which the church in Philippi had been built, and if the people continued to let Jesus be the center of their lives as they continued to grow in the Lord, then Paul had no doubt that they would finish well.

In Dr. Lehman Stauss's Bible Commentary on Philippians, he gives us some wonderful words about Paul and the Philippian church. The following quoted paragraph is found on pages 43-44. Please pay close attention to these words. "Then, too, the 'good work', the divine work of regeneration, was always manifest in the Philippian saints. Paul could not recall anything in their actions or attitude that did not give evidence of the new birth. **'I thank my God upon every remembrance of you' (Phil. 1:3).**' Every time his mind reminisced about them, Paul vividly pictured their good works' which were but the fruits of the Spirit's good work." There was the true spirit of Christian love shown by Lydia (**Acts 16:15**) and the jailer (**Acts 16:33-34**), those first converts in Philippi and those who doubtless took hold of those who were saved later. How rare in our age is such a fellowship! How sweet to Paul was such a memory! His confidence was well grounded since it was not in the saints, but rather in the Author and Finisher of their faith. What a ground for confidence! Praise God for a confirmed fellowship."

D. Paul is satisfied with the saints' feelings. vs. 7-8

I must tell you that I love verses 7-8. They tell us explicitly that Paul carried a great burden for the Philippian believers, and he also knew that they carried a great burden for him, especially since he was in prison. Paul told the Philippian Christians that it was only right for him to feel the way he did about these converts, because he could never get them out of his mind or off of his heart. He had enormous feelings for these believers, and he knew that they did for him as well. He knew without a doubt that these Philippians empathized with him while he was in his bonds, and that they would indeed stand with Paul in defense and confirmation of the Gospel. Paul knew this because all of these believers had been recipients of the same saving grace that Paul had experienced, he could truly count on them. It was not only Paul's grace, but it was and is every genuinely born-again believer's

experience of saving grace that gives us a true confirmation that we can trust others who have come to know Christ as well. You might say, that because of the saving grace which Paul and the Philippian believers had experienced, they were really comrades in the work of the Lord. They had the common denominator of not only the salvation experience, but they also had the same Holy Spirit of God living in them.

In verse eight, Paul concludes his thought about his satisfaction by telling the people that God will bear him record and confirm his witness that he truly loves the believers with the same deep feelings that Jesus Christ has for all of us. The word "bowels" here refers to the seat of emotions. Paul is telling the Philippian followers of Christ, that he longs to be with them again because he loves them so much, just like Jesus loves us. Truly, Paul had an enormous love for this fellowship of believers, and he was not ashamed to call them his own, even when he was in prison and they were no where near. Deep affectionate Christian love for others we hold dear is far greater than any other kind of love in the entire world. Fellowship with other believers is so refreshing in a world of self-centered selfishness. May God give us many of the warm relationships in this cold world of isolationism.

III. NOTICE PAUL'S SUPPLICATION. vs. 9-11

In verse four of this chapter, Paul told the Philippian believers that he remembered and prayed for them every time he prayed. He truly wanted them to know just how much they meant to him, and how serious he was about interceding on their behalf before a righteous and holy God. Of course, please remember that Paul was in a Roman prison when he wrote this epistle, so he had plenty of time to pray, and because he didn't know how much more time he might have on this earth, he truly prayed with fervency. So now, we are going to take a close look at the content of Paul's prayers for the Philippians. Let's pay close attention to the content of his prayers and see what we can learn from this dear man of God.

A. He prays for a fuller expression of love. v. 9

In verse nine, Paul tells the believers in Philippi that he is praying for them to have a greater love for Jesus, and then demonstrate that love in ministering to others. Paul's desire is that these believers might have an abundance of love, and that this love may be the result of them having real or genuine knowledge of God's Word and will for their lives. The word "knowledge" here is the Greek word, epignosis, and it means to have deep knowledge of something. So, Paul is telling the Philippians that he prays for them to have a deep understanding of God's truth, and that they demonstrate this truth practically by loving Christ more, and by loving others around them. And, he tells them that if they abound in this kind of love, then they will discern God's plan and purpose for their lives, and that they will be able to make wise judgments about life. The implication is that if they don't love Christ and others appropriately, they will never know the deep truth of God, or even be able to discern His wisdom and will for their

lives. The reason this is true is because God is love, and we can never know His plans and purposes for us until we have a fervent love for Christ, and in turn, allow Jesus to love others through us. So, Paul wanted desperately for his friends at Philippi to grow in the grace of God, and then develop an unshakable love for Jesus. Then, when a believer has the love of Christ dwelling in him or her, then he or she will have on his or her heart what Jesus has on His. And we know from our study of God's Word that Jesus has the souls of men and women on His heart continually. Therefore, this prayer warrior, Paul the Apostle, tells the Philippians from a Roman prison that he wants them to dearly love Jesus and then demonstrate that love for others.

B. He prays for a finer evaluation of life. v. 10

In verse 10, Paul continues his prayer for the Philippians by telling them that he is praying for them to have a finer discernment of what is truly important in life. He wants these believers to have the same priorities that Jesus has, and Paul says that he is praying for them to be able to test and see what is truly valuable for this life and for the life which is to come. In other words, Paul wants the followers to be able to make their priorities those things that are important for eternity, and not to waste their time on things that are temporary. So my friends, are you making the things of God your priorities in life? Do you seriously have on your heart what Jesus has on His? Are you able to truly discern which is of eternal value and what is only temporarily valuable for right now? If you are, then maybe you should just move ahead with demonstrating your love for Christ and others. If you are not able to choose the priorities, maybe you need to spend some time in God's Word in order to be able to discover where you should be spending your time and energies.

In the last part of verse 10, Paul gets down to the nitty-gritty in his disclosure to the Philippians about what he is praying for them. Let me copy part of this verse to draw your attention to it. **".....that ye may be sincere and without offence till the day of Christ."** This is a tremendous statement! What Paul is saying is that he is fervently praying that the believers in the church at Philippi should be genuine and not false religious pretenders. The word sincere in the Greek language actually means, "without wax", or pure with no false ingredients. The words, "without offense" refers to the possibility of believers harming their testimonies or influence by scandalous or hypocritical activity in their lives. And, Paul is being very precise and telling them that he is praying that they will stay pure and genuine until the day when Christ should come again. In other words, he was praying that there would be no religious phonies who would eventually fall by the wayside on the way to the finish line. Brothers and Sisters, Paul really got down to where the people surely lived. In Paul's mind and in his prayers, he had no time for phonies. And, may I tell you that after 51 years of ministry, neither do I. I will also ask you as I did in the previous paragraph, "Are you living the fulfillment of Paul's prayer?" Are you truly a genuine child of God living a life of purity with your attention on the right priorities? If you are full of wax, let me remind you that when the heat of persecution or

trials comes your way, your wax will melt and you will be exposed for your hypocrisy.

C. He prays for a fuller experience of living. v. 11

Paul continues his prayer for the Philippian believers in this verse by telling them that he is praying that they might have a fuller experience of living righteously before others, resulting in the production of wonderful fruit. And, Paul seems to qualify his desire for the Christians by telling them that he is praying for them to be fruitful based upon what Jesus Christ does in their lives. In other words, if they are a righteous tree or plant, then they should multiply and produce the fruit of righteousness. And according to what Paul told the Galatian believers in **Galatians 5:22-23**, "**....the fruit of the Spirit is love, joy, peace, longsuffering, gentleness, goodness, faith, meekness, temperance; against such there is no law,**" then these traits should be in the lives of Christians who genuinely know Christ. There is no room for phonies who profess one thing, and then bear other kinds of fruit. And, in the last part of this verse, Paul says that living the righteous life to its fullest will bring glory and praise to God. So folks, I don't know about you, but I want to live a genuine righteous lifestyle that will produce righteous fruit and bring praise to my wonderful Lord! What about you?

Once again, I want to quote from Dr. Lehman Stauss's Bible Commentary on Philippians. On pages 59-60, he says the following. "Righteous living is the fruit of right learning; proper deportment of proper doctrine; correct behavior of correct belief."

Later on pages 60-61, Dr. Strauss says the following. "Metaphorically, the word 'fruit' is used of the Christian's attitude and actions, that outward expression of an unseen Power working within, the character of the fruit being a clear indication of the character of the power producing it. We can know a tree by its fruit. Our Lord said: '**Beware of false prophets, which come to you in sheep's clothing, but inwardly they are ravening wolves. Ye shall know them by their fruits. Do men gather grapes of thorns, or figs of thistles?**'" "Even so every good tree bringeth forth good fruit; but a corrupt tree bringeth forth evil fruit. A good tree cannot bring forth evil fruit, neither can a corrupt tree bring forth good fruit. Every tree that bringeth not forth good fruit is hewn down, and cast into the fire. Wherefore by their fruits ye shall know them." (Matthew 7:15-20)

So my dear readers, are you a genuine believer living to your fullest with a righteous lifestyle? If you are, praise God, you are producing good fruit. If you aren't, you need to change your way of living and live life to its fullest in the will of God in order to produce good fruit.

IV. NOTICE PAUL'S SOLACE. vs. 12-18

We must remember that Paul the Apostle is in prison in Rome. From his prison cell

or maybe even from house arrest, he continues to tell the Philippian believers that he is not discouraged or hopeless because of his situation. In fact, in the verses for our study on this point, Paul tells his friends that the suffering he was going through would result in the furtherance of the Gospel message. Let's take a close look at verses 12-18, and see how God has turned Paul's difficulties into great blessings.

A. Paul is comforted by a greater distribution of the Gospel. vs. 12-13

Please notice that Paul is not whining or feeling sorry for himself. Instead, God has given him a tremendous perspective on why he is in prison with the uncertainty before him. Paul says that God has allowed him to be in prison so that the Gospel could be preached to more people. And of course, Paul had always wanted to go to pagan Rome and declare the Good News of Jesus Christ ever since he had gotten saved. So here he is in the midst of a terrible trial, and rather than feeling hopeless, he is taking advantage of the opportunity to proclaim the Gospel message to every prison guard that is chained to him, and then each guard shares with other guards what Jesus had done for them. Therefore, in verse 13, we are told that the Gospel is being manifested in the entire palace (probably meaning the entire Roman courtyard) and the areas around the palace. Thus, we can most assuredly say that God was using Paul mightily from the confinement of prison.

Now, I must confess something to all of you dear readers. I honestly don't believe I could have the same type of positive attitude that Paul had if I were incarcerated and not sure if I would get out of prison alive. Paul was obviously a Spirit-filled man who had been dramatically changed on the road to Damascus, and now was one hundred percent sold out to Jesus Christ. And, his reason for living was to tell others about Christ. Should that not be the priority in our lives as well? I don't know about you folks, but I know that this is what I desire sincerely for my life. As my wife and I often say, we want to finish the race well having given our best to the Lord regardless of our circumstances and trials. I just pray if the time ever comes that I have to be imprisoned for preaching the Word of God that He will give me the strength to have the same spirit that Paul did while in this Roman prison.

B. Paul is comforted by a greater daring for the Gospel. vs. 14-16

It was one thing for Paul to have achieved the positive attitude about his circumstances while in prison in Rome, but it was quite another thing to observe from a distance of many hundreds of years how much confidence Paul's boldness brought to the other believers in Christ. In verse 14, Paul states this very thing. Let's read these words together once more.

Philippians 1:14, "And many of the brethren in the Lord, waxing confident by my bonds, are much more bold to speak the word without fear." Folks, do you see what Paul is saying? He is saying that by the way he is handling his imprisonment, many other believers were gaining confidence and courage to speak the Gospel like Paul without fear. In other words, the way Paul handled his imprisonment and still spoke up for the Lord Jesus was a tremendous pattern for other Christians to follow. I want to say again that

I can only hope that I would be able to have the same testimony if I had to face what Paul had to face. So, the Gospel message was being preached by others with a greater daring because of Paul's testimony in prison. As the people observed Paul, they were encouraged to share Jesus regardless of what they had to face.

Now in verse 15, we come to some bad news. While Paul is in prison suffering for preaching the Gospel, there are some other preachers and evangelists who are obviously jealous and envious of Paul. I am not sure why, but they must have wanted the attention Paul was getting, even while in prison. Or, maybe Paul was seeing a large number of people repenting of their sins and coming to Christ, while their ministries from the wrong motives were bearing little to no fruit. Thus, they were mad or envious, and their behavior was just another anti-Paul behavior while he was suffering so much for the true cause of Christ. And, these opponents and jealous preachers were not the Jewish haters of this new Gospel, but these were professing believers who probably said that God had called them to preach also.

This very thing is happening all around us today in the modern church here in America. I have now been in the Gospel ministry for more than a half of a century, and truthfully, I want to say with humility that God has chosen to bless my ministry and the ministry of my dear wife. And because of this, there are numbers of preachers, evangelists, pastors, and other church leaders who have attacked us unmercifully during the last several years. And, while these vicious attacks have come my way, it is during one of the most trying time in my life because of the very serious health problems that I have had now for several years. It would surely be hard enough to just deal with the health issues by themselves, but this vicious criticism and castigation has just been so demoralizing to me and my dear wife. And you know folks, most of these vicious attacks have come from jealous and envious people who have never done a lot for Jesus. No wonder that Jesus said in **Matthew 10**, that if we really get sold out to Him, we will be severely persecuted. The major problem though is this, we should expect persecution from those in the lost world, but not from those who we have given our lives to. And, I will tell you that at this very moment while I am writing this commentary, I am being attacked by people I love very much, just because they are serving Jesus through bitter strife and envy. This is what Paul described in another place. Pay attention to the following words found in **II Corinthians 12:15**, "**And I will very gladly spend and be spent for you; though the more abundantly I love you, the less I be loved.**" These are some of the most heart breaking words in all of the Bible. And yet, I relate to them so very much. The more I try to love people with the right motives, the less I be loved by those whom I have given my life to. And, I will tell you that presently, I am very discouraged and somewhat damaged by the actions of these people, but by God's grace, I will move on toward the finish line.

In the latter part of verse 15, Paul does say that there are yet genuine preachers who are preaching with good will so that people can receive the Gospel, but verse sixteen just exacerbates the hurt for Paul the Apostle.

While he is in prison suffering terribly for the preaching of the Gospel, he has religious pretenders who claim to be genuinely saved people intentionally preaching and mimicking the Gospel with insincerity hoping to add greater affliction or hurt to Paul while he is in the bonds of prison. And truthfully, there is no other conclusion that we can draw, other than they were doing this because they were angry at and jealous of Paul's success, probably there in Rome where the prison was located, and probably also some in Philippi. I say some probably in Philippi, because I don't think Paul would have used this terminology in this letter unless there were guilty people in the church he had planted as well. As it always has been, those who are the least successful always try to criticize and run down those who are successful. They just can't accept the fact that other people might do a better job than they, so they try to drag the successful people down to their levels. But, I would remind you there is a payday someday for these phony failures.

C. Paul is comforted by a greater defense of the Gospel. vs. 17-18

I have heard it said many times that the Gospel doesn't ever have to be defended, and I have even made this statement myself. And, I have often quoted the great English preacher, Charles Haddon Spurgeon, when he used to say, "The Gospel doesn't have to be defended. It is like a lion! Turn the lion loose, and it will defend itself." So, we don't really have to defend the Gospel, but in verses 17-18, Paul does defend the way the Gospel should be preached, and he emphasized the importance of a preacher having the right motive when he preaches it. Just remember that in verse 16, Paul revealed that there were some who were preaching with insincere motives and purposes. He basically rebuked the people for doing this. But here in verse seventeen, Paul compliments those who preach the Gospel for the right reason because this affirms the message Paul has preached and the motives he had demonstrated while preaching it. Paul is saying that there are those just like him who preach for the right purposes; and thus, this supports his ministry and preaching like an attorney defends his client.

Then, in verse 18, Paul basically comes to the conclusion that regardless of whether the Gospel is preached with the wrong motive or with the right motive, if it is preached, it will bring forth much fruit. And because of the power found in the preached Gospel, Paul rejoiced because he knew that the Word of God would never return void. He also was determined to not allow any insincere preacher take away his joy because the Gospel was preached for the wrong reason. Obviously, Paul knew **Isaiah 55:11**, where we find these words, "**So shall my word be that goeth forth out of my mouth: it shall not return unto me void, but it shall accomplish that which I please, and it shall prosper in the thing whereto I sent it.**" So regardless of how the Word is preached, it will not return void and will bear fruit, even from the lips of a phony preacher. There is truly power in the Word!

V. NOTICE PAUL'S SECRET. vs. 19-26

Moving forward in our study of this great text, the next thing we see is that

Paul had a secret confidence that everything was going to turn out well for him, and also for the Philippian believers. He wanted the believers in Philippi to know that his dreams and ambitions were not gone for himself, and not for them as well. He was truly a confident man and he wanted his children in the Lord to know all about this secret. So, in verses 19-26, Paul shares with the Christians in Philippi what really lays heavily upon his heart, even in spite of being in a Roman prison. I want us to take an in depth look at these verses and find the encouragement that Paul had for himself and for us today. We need to have this same kind of secret in our lives, if we are to face many of the sufferings and trials which we will face during these days before Jesus comes again, or even before He takes us on to heaven if He delays His coming.

A. Paul's secret was his dependence upon the Lord. v. 19

Please take a look at the words of verse 19. **"For I know that this shall turn to my salvation through your prayer, and the supply of the Spirit of Jesus Christ."** This is a verse of positive confidence that Paul sent to the Philippian believers about his situation. Although there are many interpretations about what salvation Paul was talking about here, I just believe that he was talking about being delivered from prison. And, we can see that he was completely confident that his deliverance would come because he said, "I know". This not only reveals his confidence, but it reveals his complete trust in the Lord Who would have to be the One Who would set him free.

Paul goes on further to tell his children in the faith that his deliverance would not only come from God, but that He would deliver him based upon the Philippian believer's prayers for him. Therefore, Paul not only trusted God for deliverance, but he trusted his dear disciples in Christ to pray for him fervently in order for God to work on His behalf. Of course, this reveals to all of us the importance of praying for each other, and especially when there are severe trials and difficulties. And for sure, we all know that if we get totally sold out to God and completely committed, Satan will bombard us with one attack after another. Therefore, we must pray faithfully for God to work on behalf of each of us as His servants. So my friends, it is very important to understand that we desperately need each other in the body of Christ, and the best way to take advantage of this is to involve ourselves in the local church.

The last thing Paul mentions in this verse is that not only is he dependent upon the prayers of God's people to get him released from prison, but he also is dependent upon the supply of the Holy Spirit. The word supply here actually means provision. In other words, Paul told the believers in the Philippian church that the Holy Spirit would provide everything he would need to face his uncertain situation. Therefore, they too must allow the Holy Spirit to provide for them the strength to even accept what might happen to Paul. And, there is a great lesson here for every believer. This lesson is that we cannot face any of the sufferings and tribulations of this world without the indwelling Holy Spirit. Better still than having Jesus Christ here in Person

is the sweet presence of the Spirit that dwells within each child of God. Sometimes we may believe that we just cannot withstand the trials and sufferings of this world, but be assured we can if we will depend upon the Holy Spirit.

B. Paul's secret was his decision to stand for the Lord. v. 20

Let's just put ourselves in Paul's position in that terrible Roman prison. He had no idea what was ahead of him for sure. But yet, in verse twenty, he tells the Philippian believers that his mind is made up, and that whatever it takes, he is going to stand up for Christ whether he lives or dies. In the first part of this verse, Paul says that he still has the hope and expectation that he might be set free, but whatever happens he desires that he will do nothing to bring shame on Christ or even his own testimony. And, Paul shares that he is tremendously confident that he will be able to stand with all boldness and surety. It is his supreme goal that Jesus would be magnified in and through him whether he lived and would eventually be set free, or even if he was not freed and had to suffer death. We might say that Paul the apostle was a truly sold out man of God with no fear of what would happen to him. And, I would like to say that only the child of God has all of his or her bases covered regardless of life or death. There is no man, religion, cult, belief or any other thing that can provide the kind of assurance that Paul demonstrated except Jesus Christ his Savior and Lord.

C. Paul's secret was his dedication to the Lord. v. 21

Let me ask you the reader a question! Are you really dedicated to the Lord? This is a very serious question because in this day of shallow Christianity, it is a rarity to find a sincere believer who has given Jesus everything! Yet, here in this Scripture verse, we find Paul in prison not having any idea what is ahead of him, and he is so dedicated to the Lord that he just lays it all on the line and says, **"for me to live is Christ, and to die is gain"**. In other words, Paul had reached the point that whether he would be freed and live more years outside of the prison cell, or whether God saw fit to allow him to face death, he was not afraid, nor was he going to quit and turn away from Christ at this point. He was probably one of the most, if not the most, dedicated man to Jesus that ever lived. He was truly God's servant and he would not turn back now after all of his years of service. This should be the depth of every believer's commitment. I pray that it might be mine, even if I ever get in the same condition Paul was in. Truly, I love and respect the apostle Paul. I can't wait to see him in heaven.

D. Paul's secret was his desire for heaven. vs. 22-23

As I deal with this point in our study, I must confess to you that it is very hard for me to cover the thought of heaven right now. The reason is that for the past eight years, I have consistently struggled with many health problems, some of which might indeed take me to heaven. For over three years I battled an incurable lung disease which I contracted in Africa from an

airborne fungus. But, God saw fit to miraculously heal me of this problem. Then, I had open-heart surgery and I continue to have heart problems, even this very day while I am typing. I had to get up and leave the computer just a couple hours ago to go and lie down before continuing this commentary. Therefore, the reality of talking about heaven right now is a little uncomfortable, not because I fear going there, but because I don't want to leave my precious wife and family who have been such a blessing to me down through the years. Yet, I do long for the day when there will be no more sickness or suffering, and when there will be no need for medicine, doctors, nurses, or anything related to sick bodies. That will be a wonderful day when we tell all of the pain, agony, uncertainty, and consternation good-bye. That will truly be a wonderful day when we see Jesus. Paul recognized this when he was writing the Philippian believers, and I recognize it today as a senior citizen waiting for the Lord to come, or for Him to call me home.

In these verses, 22-23, Paul the apostle wrote the Christians in Philippi and told them that he was in a pressured situation because he had the desire to remain here on earth and continue to labor for Jesus and hopefully bear more fruit. And yet, he was looking forward to the day he would be with Christ in heaven, which would be far better. The word strait in verse 23 means "to be held close together with pressure", like two cows in a small pen pushing against one another trying to find a comfortable spot to stand. Paul felt like the walls were coming in on him, but yet, he was trying so hard to keep his sanity while dealing with the unsanitary conditions of a prison. He was truly in a bad spot, but he was willing to do whatever the Lord wanted for him at this time.

To add a little more personal testimony to this commentary, let me tell you that I have never been incarcerated in a prison, but I have worked in prison ministry for over 40 years. I have been in some of the worst prisons on earth, but still able to leave at the end of the day. But, I can assure you that I do relate to the prison of pressure which truthfully, I am dealing with right now. I am presently pressured by my health conditions, and by having to carry on at least four different ministries and responsibilities. For one, I am pastoring a new church which is somewhat struggling. Secondly, I am overseeing a missions ministry in Africa which I have been in charge of for seventeen years. Thirdly, I am trying to get a new Bible college started and off the ground in order to help train many foreign preachers who have been forgotten and neglected by many churches and denominations. And fourthly, I am having to constantly raise funds to keep all of these ministries going, and most of this, without much help from anyone but my wife. Would you say that I am under pressure? I would, and in fact, while I am writing this commentary, I am struggling with what I might give up, or what I need to keep doing. So, I relate to Paul and what he was going through in the Roman prison. I do feel like I am in a strait or maybe traveling through a tunnel hoping that the light at the other end is an opening and not an oncoming train or vehicle. I have been in this spot for many years, but hopefully, the Lord will soon come and we will find that rest at the end of

this world of labor and much trouble. You might say that I am in "The Overload Syndrome", like the title of an old book which I am presently reading which was written by Dr. Richard Swenson.

E. Paul's secret was his duty to the saints. vs. 24-26

Folks, I just want to say that there probably has never been a greater Christian than Paul the apostle. I mention this again because of what he tells the believers in Philippi in verses 24-26. These verses are absolutely profound.

In verses 24-25, Paul tells these Christians that although it would have been better for him to go and be with Jesus, he really wanted to stay here on earth in the flesh so that he could once more come to Philippi and see them once more and help them to grow in the Lord and experience more of God's joy in their lives. In other words, he didn't want his home going to heaven to bring more discouragement upon his dear children in the ministry. Instead, he wanted to stay just awhile longer and bring more joy to these believers because he loved them so much. He did not want his death to be a means of bringing more discouragement to his friends in Christ. Dear reader, do you see the unfathomable compassion of Paul for these people that he had won to Christ? I do, and I must say that this love could not be superseded except by the love of Jesus for lost sinners.

Then in verse 26, Paul tells his believing friends in Philippi that he wanted to come and see them and bring them much abundant joy by his personal presence. And further, he knew that if he could see them one more time, that they would also be an encouragement and means of joy for him as well because they would reciprocate his love. The summary of Paul's thinking in these three verses is that if he didn't die shortly, that he would be able to use one last visit to see his friends in Christ and try to help them as any pastor should feel a duty to his flock. I would say that Paul was not only an evangelist, missionary, and church planter, but he was also a loving pastor who cared for his sheep. I want so much to be just like this great servant of God was. I just wish that more and more pastors had this same relationship with the people that God allows them to serve. Our churches would be in much better condition today, if there were more pastors who genuinely loved and cared for their people. Thank you, Paul, for such a tremendous pattern for pastors to follow. I would ask all of you readers to join me in praying that God might raise up more pastors like Paul in this generation of vocational pastors who seem to have chosen their profession as a job rather than a calling from God!

VI. NOTICE PAUL'S SERMON. vs. 27-30

We now come to the last four verses in Chapter one of Philippians. Paul concludes this chapter with a sermon to the Philippian believers. He preaches to them by the means of this letter and he gives them an admonition about how they should live

and conduct themselves as faithful servants of God during those troubled times. They were given direct instructions on how they ought to be living and standing for the truth of God's Word regardless of how bad things were. It even seems to me that Paul's instructions in these last four verses seem to be somewhat like a final word to these Christians. Of course, Paul had already told these fellow believers that he genuinely hoped to visit them again, so just maybe in the back of his mind he had the feeling that he would not see them again. So, he wants to encourage them specifically in three areas to be faithful. Let's take a look at these three areas and glean from the text what Jesus is trying to say to us today.

A. Paul challenged the saints to stand fast in one spirit. v. 27a

In the first part of this verse, Paul tells the believers that they should conduct themselves as believers ought in order to affirm the Gospel message that he and his spiritual children had been preaching. The word "conversation" here in the King James Bible actually means conduct or behavior. The idea was and still is that every child of God should make sure that his or her life should attest the profession they are making as believers in Christ.

Paul goes on to tell the believers that whether he would get to see them again in Philippi or not, it was his desire that he would receive the news that these dear believers were standing with one spirit in full unity for the Lord Jesus Christ. For him to tell them this at this point makes me believe that there was indeed some division in the church and some uncertainty in Paul's mind that they would remain unified. Yet, he knew that if they remained divided, it would negate their testimony and no doubt destroy the work that he had done when he had planted the church there in Philippi. And I might say, that nothing hurts a man of God any worse than to see the work that he has worked so hard to build be destroyed after he leaves the work. Personally, I have seen this happen in and through my own ministry, and it is devastating; especially when on two occasions I almost destroyed my health trying to build churches, and then the churches dwindled years later after my wife and I left.

B. Paul challenged the saints to strive together for the faith. vs. 27b-28

The next thing that Paul says in his sermon to the Philippians is that he sincerely desires that they will continue to work (strive) together in unity to bring people to a believing faith in the Gospel message. He wanted these believers to labor faithfully as a unified force in order to enhance the Gospel message and the growth of the Kingdom of God. He wanted them to grow the work of Christ rather than hinder the work they were given to do in a negative way.

The second thing Paul tells the believers in Philippi in verse 28 is that they might just as well expect persecution and terror from those that did not know Christ, but they should not be overcome by fear, but stay faithful and not allow the attacks by the lost world to destroy their faith, but instead, let

the persecution be a reminder of their personal salvation. In other words, Paul was explicitly saying, that yes, they would suffer, but this suffering would be a reminder of the value of their salvation here in this world, but especially in the world to come. And, they must always remember that their salvation came only from God and no one else. Therefore, they should rejoice in spite of whatever they had to face. May God help all of us to handle the persecution and suffering that we receive as believers the same way Paul told the Philippians they should handle them.

C. Paul challenged the saints to suffer for Christ. vs. 29-30

In these final two verses in Chapter one, Paul goes on to explain to the believers that they would indeed suffer, but that they should look at this suffering as an act of honor for the child of God who goes through the suffering. When he says that suffering is given in the behalf of Christ, this statement reminds us that whether we realize it or not, this suffering is a gift from God because when we endure it even with joy, we bring honor to the Christ we are serving. Therefore, instead of whining and complaining, we should be giving God the glory for the privilege to suffer on His behalf. Yes, as ridiculous as it may seem, if we suffer for Christ, we are suffering for His sake. This means that we identify with the suffering of Jesus and because of this we will come to understand a greater intimacy with Him. Therefore, we must stop and realize the potential benefits from our suffering, and we must not allow this suffering to be in vain by not responding to it properly.

Paul closes this chapter by telling the people that they are now experiencing the same conflict or suffering that he and Silas experienced when they were in Philippi. You may remember that they were imprisoned in this city, and during the midnight hour they sang praises to God. The Lord sent an earthquake and shook the prison until the doors came open. The Philippian jailer came running in believing that the prisoners were gone and crying out, **"Sirs, what must I do to be saved?" "And they said, Believe on the Lord Jesus Christ, and thou shalt be saved, and thy house." (Acts 16:30-31)** Paul was telling these believers that they had witnessed first hand his suffering, and now, they were hearing about his additional suffering in the Roman prison. Paul was telling the people that they would endure suffering, but with the help of God, they could make the best out of it. This should surely be our attitude toward suffering as well.

"Paul's Challenge Concerning Servanthood"

Scripture: Philippians 2:1-30

Paul the apostle closed Chapter One by reminding the Philippian believers that if they really were committed to Christ, they could certainly expect much persecution. However, Paul told these followers of Christ that if they would work hard at maintaining unity in the flock and center their attention on one vision and purpose for their church life, then they would be able to withstand the persecution that would come their way.

Based upon his instructions to the Philippian Christians, Paul now begins Chapter Two by reminding these dear people that it would not be necessary for them to face the persecution alone because they would have a Comforter there to console them, and that encouragement would be in the form of the Holy Spirit. Therefore, the people in Philippi needed to concentrate on their unity in the body of Christ and devote themselves to a humble spirit of respect and love for the other believers. In fact, this is what I have been trying to teach believers for over 51 years. The point is, if we will get our pride out of the way and esteem others better than ourselves, the Spirit of God will work in our midst dynamically, and we will be fruitful servants of God. Let's take a close look at Chapter Two and learn as much as we can about servanthood.

I. NOTICE THE ENTREATY OF PAUL. vs. 1-4 (For Unity)

Paul begins this chapter by making an appeal for unity in the church. The reason for this appeal for unity was based upon a problem between two women in the church, Euodias and Syntyche, as we find their names in Chapter Four. We don't really know what the disunion was about, but undoubtedly it was causing some real problems. So, Paul makes this appeal to the church family in Philippi.

A. Notice the basis of this unity. v. 1

If we are going to have unity in the body of Christ, the Church, then we must know what the basis of this unity is. Therefore, Paul gives four ingredients of genuine unity in the fellowship of believers. All four of these are found in verse one.

1. This unity is based upon the consolation of Christ. v. 1a

The word consolation here comes from the Greek word, *paraklesis*, which literally means to come along side of someone to offer encouragement. The point Paul is making is that since there is comfort in and through our Lord Jesus Christ, there is no need for disunity in the body because Christ is here along side of us to give encouragement to stay unified. This makes me to dwell on the thought of how two people who call themselves believers can have the same indwelling Christ, and yet, be at odds with each other and not make an attempt at reconciliation. How can we be recipients of Christ's consolation and not show the same consolation to others. So, this consolation is one of the basic ingredients of unity. Let's move on to three more.

2. This unity is based upon the comfort of Christ. v. 1b

The second word used here in this verse for comfort is almost identical to the same Greek word I mentioned in the previous verse, only with a little more emphasis. The word here is *parakleton* which is also the word for the Comforter whom Jesus promised to send to every believer in **John 14:16**. The meaning is that not only could the Philippian believers be consoled by the indwelling Christ, but that the Holy Spirit would intentionally come along side of each child of God to administer comfort. I suppose we could say that it would be like a rescue boat or ship at sea coming along side of a broken vessel in order to provide safety. So hopefully, the Philippian believers got the message that Paul was trying to get across to them. The message was that if the two ladies in the church were to be reconciled and become unified, they must appropriate the assistance of the indwelling Christ in the person of the Holy Spirit Who would come to their aid to help them find encouragement and the necessary reconciliation in the midst of their love for one another. Without this love, there could never be reconciliation. This love here mentioned is agape love, which is the love that loves unconditionally like the love demonstrated to us when we did not deserve it. This agape love brought about our eternal salvation.

3. This unity is based upon the communion of the Spirit. v. 1c

The third basis for our unity in the family of God is the communion with and in the Holy Spirit. This communion refers to the Greek word, *koinonia*, which means the unique fellowship that we all have as children of God. This fellowship of the Holy Spirit makes it possible for us to have unity and togetherness when nothing else can. So, Paul was telling the believers in Philippi that there was absolutely no excuse for division because of the common denominator of the Holy Spirit within each of us which makes it possible for us to be likeminded, unified, and singular in our motives and purpose. Therefore, every child of God has the wonderful privilege of having should we say, "a unique stickiness or glue" which should bind us to each other, rather than us being at odds with one another. I can truly attest that it is very difficult for any two believers who have the same Father and the same Holy Spirit to be divided very long. This should not be, and it must not be for the sake of the Kingdom of God.

4. This unity is based upon the compassion of the saints. v. 1d

The last part of this verse seems to the modern day believer to be totally foreign to what Paul must have been talking about earlier in this verse. But truthfully, the word *bowels* here refers to the seat of emotions which the people in Paul's day knew very well. He was telling them that if they were going to have unity in the body of

Christ, they needed to demonstrate "genuine feelings and mercy from their true compassion". If the Christ Who Paul said would help them in reconciliation really lived in them, then they needed to demonstrate true love coming from the depths of their hearts and souls for each other. They were to be moved with compassion and feelings for their brothers and sisters in Christ. These Philippian believers were to allow the compassion of Christ which was in them to flow from them to each other. For sure, we are to always love the lost world, but we also are to retain and demonstrate His love and compassion toward others within the family of God.

B. Notice the beauty of this unity. v. 2

1. This unity will produce a beautiful influence. v. 2a

I sincerely love what Paul tells the Philippian believers in the first part of this verse. Just remember that Paul is writing this letter from a Roman prison. From hundreds of miles away, Paul tells these believers that if they will put into practice what he has told them in verse one, then the result will bring joy to him while even in prison, and to others also wherever their story is told. This is truly the beauty of unity! When unity is present, then many people will be beautifully influenced by the outcome. We just need to remember that if we want our lives to bring a beautiful influence on others, then we must have love for others and the unity it brings.

2. This unity will produce beautiful intentions. v. 2b

The second part of this verse tells us that unified people will have the same mind, the same purpose, the same vision, and the same intentions. In other words, unity will place all believers in the same spot, with the same goal, with the same ambition and with the same efforts that are important to Christ. As I often say, "we will all have on our hearts what Jesus has on His"; winning people to Him. However, if we are divided, we will not have the same priorities as Jesus does.

Maybe this would be a good time for me to stop and ask you our readers, do you have the same burden, the same priorities, and the same intentions that Jesus does? If you don't, this would be a good time to deal with this matter so that you can be a true servant of God with the team spirit trying to please the Manager everyday. There is nothing that is as important to Christ as having servants on His team unified and working with the same team spirit that He wants all of us to have.

3. This unity will produce beautiful interests. v. 2c

In the third part of verse two, Paul tells the believers in Philippi that

they should have the love for the same things. In other words, they needed to hate what Jesus hates and love what Jesus loves. Listen to what Dr. John MacArthur says in his Bible Commentary on Philippians, page 107. Here is what he says. "To have the same love is to love others equally. On a purely emotional level, having equal love for others is impossible, because people are not equally attractive. Agape (love), however, is the love of will, not of preference or attraction. It is based upon an intentional, conscious choice to see the welfare of its object. It is because agape (love) is based on the will that it can be commanded."

Did you notice the term "love of will"? This means that to have agape love for others is to choose to love others regardless of whether they are loveable or even deserve our love. This agape love is a choice to love people just simply because we have the love of Christ in our hearts because of the indwelling presence of the Holy Spirit. Therefore, we must love what Jesus loves, the souls of men and women, and we must extend this love regardless of whether we feel these people are worth our love or not.

Obviously, because of the circumstances and situation in Philippi with the division between Euodios and Syntyche, Paul tells the people that they must choose to love one another with the love of Christ; even if they didn't want to. Thus, there could never have been unity unless the Christians in Philippi loved one another with the unconditional love of Christ. When we are unified with the love of Christ within us, then our same interests will be beautiful.

4. This unity will produce beautiful intimacy. v. 2d

The phrase, "being of one accord", is a tremendous statement because it refers to the potential and possibilities of two people with a broken relationship coming back together in a close fellowship with one another. Just as our intimacy with Christ is so wonderful, our spiritual and emotional intimacy with others in the body of Christ is a wonderful thing. And quite honestly, there is nothing so terrible as broken intimacy between two professing believers who are at odds with one another. I believe that only eternity will reveal the infinite damage that has been done to the cause of Christ by people who call themselves believers, and yet, get angry and bitter toward one another and never attempt reconciliation. And, I am confident that many people will probably die without Christ and go to hell because of many professing Christians who provide such a negative testimony because of their pride and self-centeredness found in their broken relationships. Do you know of someone you need to call and start the healing process today?

5. This unity will produce a beautiful intellect. v. 2e

For over 51 years I have been a full-time pastor. During these years I have spent probably thousands of hours trying to get troubled husbands and wives to come back together and regain the same mind about their marriage, their children, and their future. But sad to say, many of these have refused to do so. Instead, because of their adamant refusal to allow God to unify their homes, much suffering comes to everyone in the family, and if these people are professing believers, then much damage is done in their church as well. Therefore, having the same mind means to think alike, dream alike, plan together, work together, and attempt to reach the same goals. So, this is what Paul is telling the Philippian Christians. They needed to make sure that they lived, loved, worked, and served God with the same mind and purpose. This could only be possible if they lived in total obedience to Christ with Him reigning as their Lord! My question today is, "Are we thinking alike?" If not, we need to do something about this today. And as Paul said in **Romans 12:2**, we need to have a transformed or renewed mind made possible only by the working of the Holy Spirit in all of us. So, let's be like-minded so that we can be like Jesus in everything we do for Him as His servant!

C. Notice the burden of this unity. vs. 3-4

Now we come to the burden of having unity in the body of believers. This means that in addition to everything Paul has covered in the first two verses of Chapter Two, he now presents the burden or responsibilities for maintaining unity in the body of Christ which means the church. Unity doesn't happen without a sincere concentrated effort, and neither does it go on happening without us bearing the burden for keeping it. That is what I want us to talk about in verses 3-4.

1. This burden includes deeds with the proper motive. v. 3a

If we are to contribute to the unity in the body of Christ, each of us needs to get under the burden of manifesting the proper motive in all that we do for Christ. This is exactly what Paul tells the Philippian believers in the first part of verse three. He mentions the fact that it is wrong to do anything out of strife or vainglory. This means that every believer should not be jockeying for position because of jealousy or envy, but each child of God should give himself or herself to doing what we do in order to bring glory to God and not to self. Why? Because trying to get glory for self is simply empty glory. And, we should always remember that the word vain comes from the word vanity which means to chase the wind. So, if what we do in our service for the Kingdom is done from the wrong motive, then it is just wasted like trying to chase the wind. May I ask if you have the right motive for your service in and to the body of Christ?

2. This burden includes deeds with the proper method. v. 3b

In the second part of verse three, we find a tremendous instruction from Paul concerning the method we should use in order to help bear the burden for unity in the body. Our method should be to demonstrate lowliness or "meekness". Now the word meekness does not mean weakness, but instead it literally means "strength under control with a teachable spirit." My, what a wonderful thought! We are to have strength and confidence while we show to others a spirit of humility. And when we do this, it also means that we will maintain a teachable spirit by which we can learn from Jesus and even others that God places in our lives in order to help us grow. If we don't have this teachable spirit, we will never be able to listen and pay attention when God uses others to minister to us as we try to minister to others. Closed-minded and know-it-all people are never really used by God, because their method of service in trying to bring unity will never work out fruitfully. Therefore, we need to make sure that our method and our motives are right when we try to encourage the body of Christ.

3. This burden includes deeds with the proper modesty. v. 3c

Someone has said that most people spend their time thinking about the "island of me". Of course, this means that so very often we are so self-centered that we can't even think about others, let alone try to help others. In the last part of verse three, Paul tells the Philippian believers that if they were going to help bear the burden of bringing unity to the church, they would have to get self out of the way and care more for others than they did for themselves. Can this be possible? Only if we are controlled by the love of Christ and allow Him to help us to put others first.

How can this be illustrated? Well, let me ask you, "would you rather your neighbor get a new car before you"? Would you want someone else to move into a brand new home more so than you? If this sounds a little ridiculous, you may be right until you begin to see what Paul is talking about in this verse. He is saying that if we have the proper modesty in our lives, then our primary concerns will be upon Jesus first and others second. Then, self will fall in line thirdly. You see folks, the Christian life is about Him and them, not about us and ours. Therefore, if we are going to help bear the burden or responsibility for unity in the body of Christ, we must have this unselfish attitude. And, this attitude is only possible if we are controlled by the Holy Spirit of God working through us as we seek to bear our load in the body of Christ. If every believer would realize this and conduct himself or herself in this manner, then unifying presence of Christ would be in our midst.

4. This burden includes deeds with the proper materials. v. 4

Let me ask each of you readers a question. What do you give more attention to in your life than any other thing? Of course, we all know that Jesus should come first in all that we do, but if we have the proper value system and balance in our lives, then serving Christ faithfully by ministering to and serving others is the primary responsibility that every child of God should have. So, verse four is basically an extension of verse three where Paul tells the Philippian Christians that others should be more important to us than ourselves. In other words, when we are where we should be with Christ, then our things (materials) will fall subservient to the needs of others. Therefore, just like Jesus came not to be ministered to, but to minister and give His life a ransom for many (**Matthew 20:28**), our focus should be on sharing the love of Christ with others, and when they come to Christ, then it should be our priority to mentor them and help them follow the example of our Lord Jesus Christ.

Hopefully by now, we have come to understand the importance of unity in the body of Christ, and also, that it is every believer's responsibility to discover the basis and beauty of unity among his or her fellow Christians, but also that it is truly every believer's responsibility to help bear the burden for maintaining unity among fellow followers of Christ. We should not, and we must not feel that it is other people's responsibilities to carry the entire load for maintaining unity in the church. So therefore, we best be careful to not expect from others that which we don't expect from ourselves. Now, let's move on and take a vivid look at the example our Lord Jesus set for all of us as He became the perfect example of a servant for all of us to follow. These next few verses should truly change our lives when we stop to visualize what Jesus did to demonstrate servanthood.

II. NOTICE THE EXAMPLE OF JESUS. vs. 5-11

Today, we continue our study of this second chapter of Philippians where Paul continues to tell the believers in Philippi that our primary responsibility as children of God is to be servants to Christ and to others. In the first four verses of this chapter, Paul addressed the need for the believers to be in complete unity so that they "together" can be effective in their service to others. Disunity always prevents God's people from concentrating on others. Why? Because selfish people seeking only to please themselves and provide for themselves is a tremendous obstacle to being servants to others following the example of our Lord. So, in verses five through eleven of this chapter, we will take a careful look at the pattern of servanthood which Jesus exemplified for every one of us as children of God to follow. Therefore, let's make an effort to learn the practical implications of the example that Jesus set for all of us.

A. Notice His condescension. vs. 5-8

1. First, Jesus condescended from the position of God. vs. 5-6

Verses five and six are tremendous verses whereby Paul the Apostle tells the Philippian believers that they should have the same attitude that Jesus had when He gave up all of heaven and came down to this earth to be born of a woman, live among men, and then ultimately die on the cross and then arise from the dead. As Christ had a humble attitude and servant-heart, so should every born-again believer as well. Listen to what Dr. John MacArthur says in his Bible Commentary on the Book of Philippians. On page 119, he says the following. "Paul was not merely describing the Incarnation to reveal its theological truths, magnificent as those are. He presents the supreme, unparalleled example of humility to serve as the most powerful motive to believers' example of humble self-denial, self-giving, self-sacrifice, and selfless love as He lived out the Incarnation in obedient submission to His Father's will (**Luke 2:49; John 3:16-17**).

In other words, folks, Jesus Who was God, capitulated His heavenly position in order to come down to this earth so that He could ultimately die on the cross for our sins. Therefore, this kind of humility should be the attitude that we all have as we seek to serve Jesus faithfully. So, may I ask you, "what kind of attitude do you have"? Do you have the mind of Christ? Just try to imagine the sacrifice that Jesus made in giving up so much in order to condescend temporarily to the position of a human being. He was equal with God and as God, but he readily gave up everything temporarily so that He could come down in order to save us and take us back up with Him to live forever. There has never been a greater example of servanthood.

2. Secondly, Jesus condescended from the position of glory. v. 7, **John 17:5**

Stop and think with me for just a moment! Can you imagine the beautiful and radiant glory that Jesus left up in heaven to come down to this sin-cursed earth in order to take on the form of a man and ultimately die for our sins? It is truly beyond our comprehension why He would do this, except for His marvelous and amazing love. The very thought of this should bring all of us on our knees in broken humility. And yet, we know that He did this so that one day we could go to heaven and experience this same wonderful glory when we live and dwell in His constant radiance and presence.

3. Thirdly, Jesus condescended to the punishment of the grave. v. 8

The Bible says in **Romans 6:23, "For the wages of sin is death; but the gift of God is eternal life through Jesus Christ our Lord"**. The truth of this verse is that sin has to ultimately have a payday. And because every human being is a sinner, therefore, everyone would eventually be judged if it were not for the death of Jesus Christ on the cross of Calvary. You see folks, Jesus, who knew no sin, came down

from heaven to become sin for us so that we didn't have to experience the judgment for sin called spiritual death. And, we all should know that the only law that can never be broken is the law of the harvest. Whatever a man or woman sows, he or she shall assuredly reap. And because of this, Jesus loved us so much that He was willing to come to this earth and become man so that He could die for our sins. Up in heaven, there was and never will be death. So, in order for Christ to die, He had to come down and take on Himself the bodily form of man so that He could die for the sins of the entire world. And we need to always remember that Jesus' life was not taken by the Jews or Roman soldiers, but He voluntarily breathed out His last breath while hanging on the cross, and when He did, He then died. Had He not been willing to exhale His breath and life, then He could not have died. But He did die, and because He paid the sin debt for every human being, then we have the privilege of being free from the ultimate judgment for sin if we get saved and give our hearts to Him. So, our precious Lord condescended from the realm of heaven and became obedient unto death, even the horrible death of the cross. There has never been demonstrated such love since the beginning of time. Therefore, we too should humble ourselves and serve Him faithfully in order to be a servant like Jesus. In other words, He gave up all that He had in heaven in order that we might get saved and one day go to heaven to enjoy this wonderful place with Him. Don't you think that we should give Him everything because He gave up everything for us? I surely do, and this is the way I want to live the rest of my life. It is called total surrender or commitment!

B. Notice His coronation. vs. 9-11

From the low of condescension to the heights of coronation we travel in these verses before us right now. Jesus gave up all of heaven temporarily in order to come down to this earth to live among men, and then die on the cross for our sins. After He was crucified and put to death, He was taken down from the cross by Joseph of Arimathea and placed in the borrowed tomb. He stayed there for three days and three nights, and late on Saturday evening or early Sunday morning, Jesus arose from the dead as He had told the disciples He would. Now, the price of redemption had been paid and soon Jesus would ascend from the Mount of Olives and return to His royal position in heaven. Verses 9-11, tell us about what must have surely happened when He returned to heaven. His return must have been the greatest coronation day in history. Truly, He was worthy of this coronation, and because of the price He paid for us down here on earth, we too will one day enjoy His presence in that place of eternal bliss.

1. He has been given a royal throne. v. 9a

No doubt when Jesus arrived back in heaven after His ascension, He

was led to His royal throne where He would forever sit and rule as the King of kings and the Lord of lords. He had been faithful to carry out the task of priceless redemption, and now He was being re-instated with all of the pomp and circumstance that could be offered. This was not an ordinary person returning from a trip abroad, but this was the sinless perfect Son of God returning with nail-scarred hands and feet showing the price that He had paid for our redemption. And surely, He should have been given this royal throne, and we forever should be His willing servants down here on earth and even after we go home to see Him. I assure you, folks, that all of those down through the years who have mocked and castigated this sinless Son of God will one day willingly acknowledge Him for Who He really is. I just hope and pray that I will be able to witness that solemn moment when these people fall on their faces before Him. But the sad thing is that it will be too late for them to get saved and they will perish for eternity in hell.

2. He has been given a royal title. v. 9b

In verse nine we come to understand just how much God the Father loved His only begotten Son. Undoubtedly, when Jesus left heaven to come to this earth to die for our sins, God the Father most assuredly promised Him that when His mission on earth was over that He would receive great rewards when He arrived back in heaven. Not only would He be given back His throne, but He would be given a name that is above every name, and He would reign with this name forever. We are not perfectly sure what this entire name of Jesus will be, but I assure you that it will be greater than any name which has ever been given to others here on earth. In fact, the very meaning of this passage was and still is that every person who has ever lived will bow before Jesus and give Him adoration and worship, even if it is too late for those who never gave Him any consideration while He was here on earth. From the depths of hell, men and women will exalt His name at the Great White Throne Judgment just before they are cast into the eternal lake of fire and they will be there forever and ever knowing fully that they sealed their doom when they rejected this Savior with the name above all names.

Folks, we could spend a lot of time and much effort trying to list all of the wonderful names that have been give to Jesus Christ, but enough has been said to let us know that there never has been a person like Jesus, and never will be another one that deserves the worship and praise that He does. If we can just meditate for a moment, maybe we can hear wicked men like Adolph Hitler, Joseph Stalin, Mussolini, and many other wicked men who are going to bow before the Lamb of God and give Him their worship. It is truly a wonderful thought to know that those who have rejected Him and His followers will bow humbly before Him one day in heaven. Yes, Jesus truly deserves a royal title, and may God help us to give Him the deserved praise and

worship that He is worthy of. May we never forget that He alone is worthy of all of our praise and worship because He is the only way for anyone to go to heaven. So, let's give Him the glory! King Jesus!

3. He has been given a royal triumph. v. 10

Verse ten of this text is truly a revelation of the victory that Jesus won when He came down to the earth, died on the cross, and on the third day arose from the grave. He won the victory over death, hell and the grave. And because God the Father restored Him to His throne in heaven where He now rules and reigns, every knee shall bow before Him and every tongue shall confess that He indeed was and still is the King of kings and the Lord of lords. He rules the entire world, and without His approval and His commands, nothing can ever happen because He truly is the Sovereign Ruler of the universe. As we have already stated in verse nine, one day every person that has ever lived on the earth will bow before Him and confess Him as Lord and Master. Yes, even the most vile and corrupt human beings that ever lived, will acknowledge that Jesus was indeed the incarnate Christ when He came to this earth, and that He was and still is the only Savior whereby men and women can be saved and follow Him to heaven.

It is very important for us to remember that in spite of the wickedness in the world today, and the seemingly dismal conditions on this planet, we as God's born-again believers are on the winning side. Therefore, we must not give up, quit, or lose hope! Why? Because we already know how this thing is going to turn out. So, as Paul tells the Philippian believers, "Let us rejoice in spite of our circumstances." There is truly much to rejoice about. Jesus has won and we are on His team!

4. He has been given a royal testimony. v. 11

The word confess in verse eleven is a word which means to agree with Christ and publicly confess Him as Lord and Master. This is truly the reason God has saved us. We can either confess Him now willingly as Lord and Savior while we await His return, or we can wait until we come before Him as lost sinners at the Great White Throne Judgment. The tragedy is, if we wait until the Great White Throne Judgment, it will be too late for our confession to save our souls for eternity. Therefore, it would truly behoove us to confess Him now before it is too late. Jesus had a royal testimony which we have been proclaiming for years. and years, but we must not stop now because of fear or shame. We should forever acknowledge Him as our Sovereign Lord ruling from His throne in heaven, but yet living our hearts in the person of the Holy Spirit. My question for you, my readers is, "Are you living a life that continues to bear the testimony of our risen Lord"? If you aren't, today would be the time

for you to really begin proclaiming Who Jesus Christ really is. And, if you don't know Him as Savior and Lord, you need to get saved and become one of His willing servants. Today could be your day of salvation!

III. NOTICE THE ENERGY OF THE SAINTS. vs. 12-16

In these verses, 12-16, of this chapter, Paul provides a strong admonition for the Philippian believers. He gives the people some strong instructions about how they should be using their energy for Christ in their Christian lives. In other words, He points out what they should be doing and how they should be doing it. They were to be very careful about their attitudes, their actions, and their obedience. These strong words are still very relevant for us today. Let's take a close look at these words of admonition and do our best to not only be hearers of the Word, but also doers of the Word as well.

A. Notice the route of this energy. v. 12

This verse is one of the most misunderstood verses in the entire Bible. Multitudes of people believe that we can work our way to heaven, but this is not what Paul is telling the Philippian Christians. He is telling those who are genuinely saved that as the result of what Jesus has done in their lives, they are to work or cultivate their relationship with Him so that they can grow in His grace and mercy. Their route was to be one of absolute obedience as they served Christ wholeheartedly, and they were to serve with a holy and reverential fear of failing God as they labored. They were to use their energy to bring personal growth and maturity to their lives, and of course, honor and glory to the One Who they were serving.

Therefore, my friends, let me ask you, "Are you spending your personal energy on growth and development in your relationship with Christ"? If not, once again let me encourage you to do a complete checkup and see where you are spending your time and energy. Are you laboring as a servant of the living Christ, or are you wasting your time on selfish pursuits? I pray that it is the former!

B. Notice the reason for this energy. v. 13

Why should we be working out our salvation as was mentioned in verse twelve? The answer is because God has already worked into the life of every born-again believer His presence and power through the Holy Spirit of God. Therefore, God has worked in so that we can work out by cultivating our relationship with Him daily in our lives. And, because Jesus lives within every child of God, it is His will to show us how to know His perfect will for our lives. But folks, we will never find His will until we truly seek it in a diligent way. But, once we find His will and do our best to live in His will, we will truly bring pleasure to the heart of God. I don't know about you folks, but this is the desire of my heart. I want to bring pleasure to His heart, and I

want to bring glory to Him so that He will be exalted by those whom I have had the privilege of trying to minister to. How could we ever do less than to give Him our best after He has done so much for us. Our faithful obedience should be our expression of gratitude to the One who has brought to us our personal salvation. So, let's work out diligently what He has worked in us! Let's be found faithful personally, even when others are not!

C. Notice the restrictions on this energy. v. 14

As Paul continues his letter to the Philippians, he now shares some very serious restrictions on the behavior of these believers if they are to demonstrate a good testimony. He tells them in verse 14 that they are to refrain from murmurings and disputings. The word disputings is old English, and nowadays this word means to not have arguments or disputations. And, the believers were to refrain from murmurings and arguments which would only prove to divide the believers. The idea of murmurings was like a person who would murmur under his or her breath without really saying anything, but simply showing disdain or disregard for another person.

These words of Paul were very serious words because of the potentially serious outcome of such behavior. Remember back in chapter one of this book, Paul had appealed to the Philippian believers to have unity in the flock. Here he seems to be pointing out the kind of behavior that would contribute to disunity. Obviously, these believers had a really divisive problem going on in the church, maybe between the two ladies, and they had begun to choose sides in the matter. So, let's make sure that we don't use our energy to damage our brothers and sisters in Christ.

D. Notice the results of this energy. v. 15

This is a wonderful verse because it tells us what the positive results will be if we use our energy in the proper way. Rather than having broken relationships and a bad testimony, if we use our strength and energy in a positive way, then we can have a reputation that is beyond reproach and even blameless before the world. And, if we live the way we should using our service in the right way, then there will be no spiritual rebuke or conviction from the Holy Spirit of God. Also, this kind of positive living will also be outstanding as a bright light shining in a dark and crooked world. Of course, this should be the desire and dream of every child of God. We should want our lights to so shine that no valid reproach or rebuke will come our way. Instead, we will have a dynamic testimony and others will be drawn to the Christ we serve. I don't know about you folks, but this is the way I want to live my life so that others will see Jesus in my life and that I will be an instrument of unity in the body of believers.

E. Notice the rejoicing as the result of this energy. v. 16

Verse 16 is an extension of what Paul shared in the previous verse. He goes on to tell the believers in Philippi that if they use their service for Christ in a

positive way, they will proclaim the word of life to countless people, and at the day when Christ comes to reward His servants, they will receive great rewards. These rewards will let every faithful child of God know that whatever it has cost them to faithfully serve Jesus will not be in vain. The word vain here once more means chasing the wind with no good reward. In other words, we will not end up our service empty handed, but rather will finish our course with great rewards from Jesus!

IV. NOTICE THE EXAMPLE OF THE APOSTLES. vs. 17-30

It goes without saying that the greatest servant to ever walk on this earth was our Lord Jesus Christ. He was the Servant of all servants, and there will never be another person that could possibly compare to Him and His servanthood. But, in the last verses of this beautiful chapter, Paul describes his own servanthood for Christ, and then he proceeds to list two other great servants who had ministered to him in numerous ways, especially there in Rome while he was still in prison. Paul tells the believers in Philippi that they too should follow the examples set by Timothy and Epaphroditus. And, I would just like to say that Paul set such an example for all of us in how we should respect and honor those who have been such a blessing to us. Just maybe we need to stop right about now and go and call one of the people that has helped us along the way in our service to Christ, or maybe we need to write them a note or letter of appreciation. We must never forget those who have impacted our lives in a very positive way. Paul didn't forget, and neither should we.

A. Notice the example of Paul. vs. 17-18

1. Paul was an example in sacrifice. v. 17

Paul the Apostle was not only a man of great faith, but he was also a man of reality. He never pretended that serving Christ faithfully would be easy. But in facts, he always told others that if they got serious about serving Christ, it would be a costly endeavor. And of course in many places in the New Testament, Jesus told his disciples that they would have to deny self and take up their cross and serve Him. So the fact was and still is that being faithful in our service to Jesus may cost us a lot of sacrifice. And folks, there was and still is no one that could so adequately inform us of the kind of suffering we might have to endure more so than Paul himself.

In this verse 17, Paul simply shares with his fellow believers in Philippi that he was not sure if he would live to get out of prison, but if he had to die and would never see them again, his time in planting the church in Philippi would be a great joy to his heart, even unto death. In other words, Paul had no regrets about his service for Christ, even with his present suffering and possible imminent death. He was simply saying that his years of serving Christ, which included his work in Philippi, would be a welcomed sacrifice if he had to die a

martyr. He surely lived out what he wrote earlier in this epistle when he said, "For me to live is Christ, and to die is gain". Truly, truly, Paul was a great man of God who only lived for one purpose, and that was to proclaim the Gospel. And if he had to die for Jesus, he would count that all joy!

2. Paul was an example in sharing. v. 18

In verse 18, Paul further tells the Philippian believers that he wants them to share in the joy which he was experiencing in spite of his difficult circumstances. Even with the division that was obviously present in the Philippian Church, Paul desired that the believers there in the church he had planted would continue to enjoy the blessings of the Lord, and also to keep rejoicing even if there were problems to deal with.

May I say that this is a great encouragement for us to also keep joy in our lives regardless of what we have to suffer as believers in Christ. Yes, there will always be problems as we seek to serve Jesus faithfully, but may God give us that inward peace and joy that He only can give to us. And even in the darkest moments in life, we should still rejoice because we will ultimately pass through the valley of despair. I have written a book on this topic as the result of going through clinical depression many years ago after having a tragic vehicle accident in Uganda, East Africa in which one of my staff members and best friends died. It was truly a difficult time, but God still brought joy and peace in the dark hours that I experienced. If you would like to purchase this book entitled, "When Despair Captivates The Child Of God", also subtitled, "Walking Through The Valley Of Depression", you may do so by going to the web site of Gateway International Missions, Inc. and ordering the book from the web site.

B. Notice the example of Timothy. vs. 19-23

We have just discussed the tremendous example that Paul the Apostle was as a true servant of God. Now, we come to that wonderful young man named Timothy that Paul no doubt led to Christ in Lystra on his first missionary journey there. Timothy had been instructed in the Old Testament by his mother, Eunice, and by his grandmother, Lois, who must have been great believers also. However, there is no record or illusion that Timothy's father was saved. In fact, it seems to be quite the opposite. His father was Jewish and probably a pagan because he also had purchased a Roman citizenship. We can find some information about this in the following Scriptures (**I Cor. 4:17; I Tim. 1:2, 18; 2 Tim. 1:2**). Now, let's take a close look at the wonderful example of servanthood which Paul mentions about his dear young friend, Timothy.

1. Timothy was an example in dependability. v. 19

In this verse 19, Paul tells the Philippian believers that he wants to shortly send Timothy to see them because he wants to know how things really are in Philippi. Please remember that Paul is in a Roman prison, and he knows that the church at Philippi had been having some problems. So, if he could get Timothy to Philippi, then he could bring hopefully some good news about how things had improved in the church there. It is obvious that Paul was optimistic because he felt that he would be comforted by the news Timothy could bring him. Paul had great confidence in Timothy's dependability and therefore he was counting on getting some good news about the people in Philippi. Paul would never have had such a positive attitude if it were not for his assurance that Timothy would go to Philippi and get the truth, and then return and give him an honest report.

I think this would be a good time for me to say that during this modern church age in which we live, probably the one thing that is truly missing in our churches is the dependability of our professing believers. You might say that we are in a spiritual dearth when it comes to dependability. Why do I think this is true? Well, I can't take the time to list every reason, but I believe for one thing we live in an age where there is very little integrity, yes, even among professing Christians. It just seems that very few people care about being truly honest.

The second reason I believe there is such a dearth of dependability is that very few believers want to be held accountable. And truthfully, there can be no dependability without accountability. This just simply means that we can never know whether a person is dependable unless they are held accountable for their behavior and faithfulness. And I might add, there is a shortage of faithfulness in the church today. So, Timothy had proven himself to Paul, and now Paul was trusting his servanthood to go to Philippi and get a report on how things were going there. Maybe I should ask, "Are we dependable?" I hope we can say yes to this question!

2. Timothy was an example in dedication. v. 20a

The next thing we learn about this young servant of God, Timothy, is that he was a dedicated young man without question. In fact, Paul tells the believers in Philippi that he doesn't have one man that is as dedicated to Christ as was Timothy. Paul knew that Timothy had the same mind that he had to follow Christ and to keep telling the world the Gospel message. So, Paul could send Timothy to check on the Philippian church with confidence because he had been dedicated in the past, and he knew that he would be this time.

We do need to stop and realize that dedication is different from consecration. When we are dedicated to Jesus and His ministry, this is an act that we have to take which involves total surrender. Whereas, consecration is what God does for us when we totally commit ourselves to Jesus. We can never be consecrated or set apart for Christ totally and completely unless we first dedicate ourselves totally and completely to Jesus. We must remember that yes, God in His sovereignty has planned to sanctify and consecrate us to Him, but this consecration is dependent upon our level of dedication and commitment. So once again, my question is, "Are we totally and completely dedicated to Christ like Timothy was?" I certainly pray so!

3. Timothy was an example in devotion. v. 20b

The last part of verse 20 is a remarkable statement. Paul tells the Philippians that he is sending Timothy to check on the church there in Philippi because it is totally and completely a part of Timothy's behavior to show compassion to others naturally. In other words, Timothy would not have to feign his concern and care for the people, but because he had in his heart the agape love for others just like Jesus, that it would be an act of complete devotion for him to come and check on the believers in Philippi. There was no phoniness in Timothy's behavior or ministry, and there should be none in ours. Fake people do what they are required or obligated to do, but real believers are devoted to Christ and to what Christ is devoted to. Therefore, Timothy was truly a devoted man of God, and so should we be as well!

4. Timothy was an example in desire. v. 21

In verse 21, Paul tells the Philippian believers that Timothy was not a self-centered man who lived his life and demonstrated his service with the wrong motives. Instead, Timothy was a devoted servant who had capitulated the desires of and for this world so that he could serve Christ with all of his heart. He served with no reluctance, no reticence, no half-heartedness, no reservations, but with the desires of his heart to be the desires of Jesus Christ. And, he had so prioritized his life so that all he lived for was to be a servant of the Lord Jesus Christ. May I say, "Timothy was a true example for all of us to follow." We need to get everything out of our lives so that we will be hindered by nothing when it comes to our faithful service of our King. I do know that my supreme desire is to be totally and completely sold out to Christ so that others may see me as a true example of a servant of God. If I can have and live by this desire, then I can genuinely say as Paul said in **I Corinthians 11:1, "Follow me as I follow Christ"**.

5. Timothy was an example in discipline. v. 22a

In verse 22, Paul tells the Philippian believers that they needed to be ready to receive Timothy because he had truly proved himself to Paul and to others. As his father in the ministry, Paul knew well how disciplined Timothy had been to follow Paul's leadership just like a son would follow his earthly father. This tells me that Timothy was a disciplined servant of God who had a teachable spirit through which he so disciplined his mind and his behavior that he could readily learn from Paul who had been the servant that led him to Christ, and also the one who had mentored him as he grew up in the Lord.

This would be a good time for me to tell you that after 51 years in full-time ministry, it is my conclusion that no servant of God can ever learn and grow in the Lord unless he or she is disciplined in their behavior until they have a teachable spirit and they apply themselves to learning more, and then putting into practice what they have learned in a very practical way. As we all probably know, the word discipline comes from the same root word for learning. So, without discipline, there is no learning. And without learning, there will be no fruitfulness. Therefore, we need to make a brand-new commitment to be more disciplined in our lives than ever before, even in this day when it is not to popular to do so. Therefore, let's learn that Timothy gave proof of his faithful service in the Kingdom of God by being totally disciplined in his lifestyle. My friends, this is not legalism, but it is the mandatory requirement for being a true servant of God. We cannot say that we are on God's team unless we take the necessary steps to be so disciplined that when the time comes to get on the field of service for our Lord, we excel because of our prior discipline and preparation. Could I ask you, "have you proved yourself as a disciplined servant of God?" If you haven't, don't you think it is about time to get started? There are some churches and people that are waiting to hear from a truly disciplined servant of God!

6. Timothy was an example in deeds. vs. 22b-24

In the last part of verse 22 and in verses 23-24, we discover that Paul wraps up his thoughts about Timothy by telling the Christians in Philippi that Timothy was not only a person of service by his disciplined life, but he affirmed his commitment to Christ by actually doing service for Jesus and yes, even for Paul. The point that Paul was making was that if Timothy had been faithful in the past for him, then he was also ready to carry out Paul's bidding to go to the Philippians just as soon as Paul knew how things would turn out for him due to his imprisonment. I think this just means that Paul wanted to give the people in Philippi the correct information about himself when Timothy went to see these believers, and Paul wouldn't know this until he knew the outcome of his sentence. I am inclined to believe that Paul was let out of prison during this first

imprisonment in Rome, and that he was later imprisoned again, and then ultimately beheaded by the authority of Nero. This probably happened around 68 A.D.

We need to close this thought about Timothy by saying that good intentions never accomplish much for God. But yet, when we follow up our good intentions with good deeds and actions then much can be accomplished for the cause of Christ. Someone said many years ago, "the road to hell is paved with good intentions." This is so true because people plan to get around to getting saved sometime, but unless action is taken upon our good intentions we would die lost. So, like Timothy, let's be a good example in deeds as servants of God.

C. Notice the example of Epaphroditus. vs. 25-30 (His name means Charming)

Very little is known about the servant Epaphroditus, other than in our text it says that the church at Philippi had sent him to Rome to check on Paul's condition, and also to take Paul some special gifts to fulfill some desires and wants that Paul had while being in prison in Rome. Obviously, Epaphroditus was a highly respected man of God, or the people would not have allowed him to take the gifts to Paul, and neither would they have allowed him to travel the long distance to Rome if they did not trust him. So, Epaphroditus had come to check on Paul's welfare, and now it was time for him to return to Philippi with the report from Paul. Let's take a look at the next few verses and learn some truths about Epaphroditus and his servanthood.

1. He was an example in membership. v. 25a

The first part of verse 25 tells us that Epaphroditus was a brother to Paul, thus he was a member of the body of Christ. And obviously, he was a good member of the bride of Christ for if he would not have been, Paul would not have called him his brother, and for sure, he would not have planned to send him to Philippi with the report of Paul's difficult situation.

As I type today, it is a little ironic of the subject matter we are now studying because last evening here in our church in North Carolina, I preached an in-depth message upon the importance of being faithful and concerned member of the body of Christ. In other words, once we get saved, we are then to help minister to the body of Christ with our spiritual gifts, and we are to hurt with those who hurt and rejoice with those who rejoice. In other words, we are to have a burden and compassion for those in our spiritual family. And if we don't have this burden, we need to make sure that we are saved. Epaphroditus was a full-fledged member of the body, and Paul was glad to call him his brother in the Lord.

2. He was an example in manliness. v. 25b

Also, in this verse 25, Paul tells the Philippian church that Epaphroditus was a companion in labor. In other words, this servant of God helped share the work load of taking the Gospel to the lost world. And then while Epaphroditus was with Paul in Rome, he stood to be jointly accused with Paul of evil because of his faithfulness to Christ, and to Paul as Christ's man. Thus, Epaphroditus didn't mind putting his neck on the line for Paul because he loved Paul as his spiritual brother. Folks, no one travels hundreds of miles to another country to visit and wait upon a man in the difficult circumstances of prison without having courage and a manly commitment. So now, Paul was about to send Epaphroditus back on the road and probably over the ocean to take some good news to the Philippian Church. Epaphroditus was truly a manly example of servanthood.

3. He was an example in militarism. v. 25c

Again in verse 25, we find where Paul called Epaphroditus a fellow soldier who was standing with Paul as a good soldier of Christ. This too means that Epaphroditus was courageous, determined, well-trained, devoted, and yes, submissive to his superiors. Truly this is the kind of dedicated and sold-out people we need as servants in the churches of today. You see folks, we not only need examples of good soldiers on the battlefields for our Lord, but we need those who are committed to the cause of world evangelism and willing to fight for this cause until death. Truly, in this day of easy believeism, we need some strong soldiers who will take a stand for what is right in this day when the only thing that is tolerated is tolerance! As G.H. Chesterson said, "Tolerance is the virtue of someone with no convictions."

So therefore, we find that Epaphroditus was a strong soldier of the cross, and one that was truly respectful of his superiors, and one that would be an example for other truly committed people to follow. May God multiply Epaphroditus manifold!

4. He was an example as a messenger. v. 25d

Additionally in verse 25, we find where Paul said that Epaphroditus was a faithful messenger of the church of Philippi, and thus, he had set a great example for others to follow. He had brought a faithful word from the church in Philippi, and now, Paul knew that he could be trusted to go with Timothy back to the church and give them the proper message from Paul and from the Lord Jesus Christ, the One he and Paul both served. Paul knew that when Epaphroditus got back to the Philippian believers that they would gladly receive his message with no distrust because he was one of theirs, a servant of God with true integrity. May God give us some more servants like

Epaphroditus with the charm and Christian beauty that this man exemplified.

5. He was an example as a minister. v. 25e

We now come to another word that Paul uses to describe the example of Epaphroditus. This word is "minister". In the very last phrase of verse 25, Paul tells the Philippian believers that Epaphroditus had come to Rome to visit with him and when he did, he came to minister to the needs of Paul.

There are quite a few Greek words for the word minister in the New Testament. The one that is used here is "leitourgeo", which refers to one who ministers to people based upon his position, even like that of a government minister. It also might refer to a priest who ministers in a religious setting. Thus, the truth Paul is sharing is that Epaphroditus had come to Rome as God's official representative to take care of Paul's needs. He may not have been representing a formal earthly government, but he was coming as an ambassador for the King of kings, and Lord of lords to minister to one of God's chosen vessels, Paul the Apostle. If Epaphroditus has not come to minister to Paul, his needs may have gone unmet, and his suffering could have been greater. So, we must thank God for those who exemplify what true ministers should really be. And, I would like to add that through all of my half-century of full-time Christian service, I have never gotten away from the fact that I have been privileged to be one of God's chosen ministers to represent His Kingdom. I pray that I never get over the wonder of being chosen by the great God of heaven, and I pray that you the reader won't as well.

6. He was an example in mercy. v. 26a

It is very obvious as we look at verse 26 that Epaphroditus had a truly compassionate heart toward others. I say this because as we will see in a moment, even though he was extremely sick, his concern was not about himself, but instead he was concerned about how the Philippian believers would hurt when they found out how sick he had really been. In other words, not only did Epaphroditus receive mercy from God, but he carried a heavy burden for others who might just be discouraged or depressed because of what he was going through. Just try to imagine this if you would! Epaphroditus was more concerned with the sadness of his friends in Philippi because of his sickness, than he seemed to be about the sickness which he was enduring. May I say that he truly was an example in servanthood. We definitely need more servants like this today!

7. He was an example in a time of malady. vs. 26b-27

Without a doubt, Paul the Apostle loved his friend, Epaphroditus.

This is shown so much in the last part of verse 26 and in verse 27. Paul told the Philippian believers that Epaphroditus was indeed very sick, even unto death, but God had mercy on him and spared his life. In addition, Paul stated that God also had mercy on himself, because God knew that Paul would have been extremely worse off had Epaphroditus died. In other words, if his friend had died, the misery of that loss would have been greater than his own imprisonment at the time. So, it seems that Paul is giving praise to God for His mercy as he tells the Philippian believers that God has spared all of them from extreme sorrow if Epaphroditus had died from his maladies.

I think we also need to see that in spite of his serious suffering with a bad physical disease, Epaphroditus stayed faithful to God and was more concerned with others than he was his own condition. We don't know what kind of disease Epaphroditus actually had, but because of the Greek word that is used here, we do know that it was a disease which left him without any strength or energy. Paul, indeed, did know that the sickness could have brought death to his friend, but he also knew that Epaphroditus was healed by the hand of God.

So, what do we learn from this example of servanthood? We learn that when a person suffers with serious disease or other problems, the genuine servant of God will have others more on his heart than his own condition. Would you say that Epaphroditus had gotten himself out of the way? I surely would, and I pray that I too, in spite of many years of my own sicknesses, would be able to keep others on my heart, even when suffering near unto death. Truly, Epaphroditus was a great example of a servant of God. I sincerely thank God for the fact that He spared Epaphroditus' life for a while longer, but even more so, I thank God for the kind of testimony he had while going through his suffering. I pray that I might be able to maintain this kind of testimony until God takes me on to heaven.

8. He was an example in motivation. v. 28

Epaphroditus' willingness to return to Philippi was truly a commendable thing, but we must see that he went back with the right motive. He was not going to brag about his healing or to even share an in-depth account of his suffering, but it seems that he was only going back for the encouragement of others. And, I would remind you that for a recently sick man to have to travel all the way from Rome for miles and miles to Philippi, he would have to have a non- selfish motive for his actions and dedication. I sincerely don't believe any one could justifiably accuse Epaphroditus for returning to Philippi for the wrong reason. Truthfully, I just don't know how he could have made this journey coming out of such a period of personal sickness. I sincerely can relate to this because I have travelled over five million miles in my lifetime, and many of these

were during periods of enormous sickness. Yet, by God's grace and strength, I have been able to keep going, and I am sure that this is the only way Epaphroditus could have done the same. Wow! What a manly servant of God he was, as we have already mentioned before.

9. He was an example in manifestation. v. 29

Now, Paul tells the Philippians that when Epaphroditus arrives there in Philippi that they must receive him with open arms and gladness as one of God's choice servants in the Lord. They were to welcome him with open hearts and kindness, and whatever they did, they must hold him in great reputation. So, when Epaphroditus arrived back in Philippi, he would manifest himself just simply as a servant of God, and this manifestation should be received with celebration. The people were instructed to celebrate his return home with a time of celebration and recognition because of what Epaphroditus had done for Paul and for the believers in Philippi. In other words, this real servant of God should be treated with the highest respect and admiration. God's servants should always be treated with great respect, and to do less would be to invite the judgment of God upon a people, a church, and yes, even a community. There is just no wonder that so many churches, communities, states, and even countries have suffered under the judgment of God, when so many true servants of God have been treated with such disdain and disrespect. The moment people begin to abuse the servant of God, even by their negligence, they have openly invited the chastisement of God upon their people. If you don't believe this, go back to the prophets of the Old Testament and see what happened to the cities and towns that abused, neglected, and even murdered God's choice servants. May God pity the people that reject God's servant and yes, especially the Word the true servant of God preaches.

10. He was an example in modesty. v. 30

In this last verse in chapter two, we find Paul telling the Philippian believers one more time just how devoted and dedicated Epaphroditus had been to him while he was in the Roman prison. His affirmation of this dear servant was a true testimony to how faithful Epaphroditus had been to him, and Paul wanted the Philippians to know this so when Epaphroditus arrived back in Philippi he would be welcomed and respected.

Paul goes out of his way to express just how sick Epaphroditus had been, but yet he waited on Paul, and now his concern was for the believers in Philippi who might be worried and sad because they had heard that Epaphroditus was indeed very sick. So, Epaphroditus was now ready to leave Paul and Rome and make the long trip back to Philippi, even with his weak and frail body. I believe we can all say that Epaphroditus was a true servant of God who always had others

on his heart and mind, even if he had been extremely sick. And folks, this is what the Kingdom of God and the Christian church needs today. We need some totally committed, fully surrendered, and sold-out people who know that the Gospel message is not about themselves, but about Jesus and others. May God even use this commentary to stir up some present-day believers to become servants like Epaphroditus, or Timothy, and yes, even like Paul the great apostle. I think we can say that we need some humble servants of God who have true modesty about themselves while having love for and dedication to others. Epaphroditus, Timothy, and Paul had this modesty about themselves; and thus, Jesus would truly get the glory for whatever was accomplished.

"Paul's Caution About Compromise And Sensuality"

Scripture: Philippians 3:1-21

As we move on in our study of this great epistle to the Philippian believers, we come to this third chapter where Paul really warns the believers in Philippi about allowing themselves to be misled by evil workers who want to use legalism and compromise to get control over the church members. Paul is very emphatic in telling these dear saints that the kind of attack that the church was receiving from these vile religious people was truly of the devil and characterized by fleshly religion rather than being from God. Paul was warning the saints of the danger of allowing these self-seeking, self-centered, and phony religious teachers to disrupt their fellowship in the church because the end result would be disaster for the saints of God. And may I say that this is always what happens when we as God's children try to compromise with counterfeit religion for the sake of being hospitable and tolerant. This was true in Paul's day, and it is even more so in this day of the compromising counterfeit church here in America, and yes, in most of the other countries of the world. The only thing that can stop this mess that we are seeing today is strong church leadership grounded in doctrine and truth. These leaders must take a true stand on the word and refuse to be intimidated by these religious dogs who come barking at our church doors.

Now, I want us to take a careful look at the 21 verses in this chapter and allow God to move us forward in pressing toward the mark for the prize of the high calling of God in Christ Jesus!

I. NOTICE PAUL'S PRECAUTION. vs. 1-3

A. This precaution demands that one rejoice in the Lord. v. 1

It is truly obvious to the careful reader of chapter three that there were surely many problems in the church of Philippi, but Paul would not tell the Philippians how to deal with the problem makers until he could first encourage them to keep on rejoicing in spite of what they were facing. He told them to "rejoice in the Lord". The title I have given to this study of the Book of Philippians is, "Finding Joy In The Midst Of An Unhappy World". I believe this describes succinctly what the Philippian believers were trying to do in their church fellowship while Paul was hundreds and hundreds of miles away in a Roman prison or at least in a restrained house arrest.

It has often been said that there is a world of difference between joy and happiness. I do indeed believe this because joy is that special peace and satisfaction which Jesus brings to our hearts, even when things are bad or uncertain. Yet, I also believe that true joy will not only bring peace and satisfaction, but it will also provide an outward expression of happiness which is genuine and contagious to others. So, in this very first verse of this chapter, Paul says, "when all is said and done in the midst of terrible situations, we still have reason to rejoice." The reason is the eternal assurance that we have because of our personal salvation and the indwelling presence of the Holy Spirit. Therefore, if others can't rejoice, we definitely can because we can know Who ultimately wins. Thus, Paul gives the

believers in Philippi the nudge to keep rejoicing, and he does this just before he provides the plan for defeating the enemies.

B. This precaution demands that one resist the enemy. v. 2

In verse two of this chapter, Paul lays out the names of the evil workers who were causing problems in the church at Philippi. And may I say, Paul didn't hold back when it came to confronting evil within the church, or anywhere outside the church. He was a fearless man of God who told it like it was, and then let the chips fall wherever they may. Folks, if there is an enemy, we better find out who he is and first expose him, and then develop a plan of attack to defeat him. In this verse Paul warns of three kinds of enemies who were problematic to the Philippian church.

1. One must resist the enemy's madness (Dogs). v. 2a

The Greek word used for dogs in this verse does not apply to little pets that people might caress and pat on the head while feeding them crumbs from their tables. The dogs that Paul was referring to here mean those vicious packs of dogs that roamed the streets and rummaged through the garbage piles, and would often attack the residents of a town or city. These dogs were mean and cruel, and they cared not who they destroyed or hurt. They were like wild dogs on the run seeking blood from as many victims as possible.

These dogs that had come probably from Jerusalem out to Philippi were none other than legalistic Jews who wanted to insist that people could not be completely converted unless the males agreed to the right of circumcision. They were religious zealots who cared more for the religious rites of others than they actually did for the genuine salvation of others. So, Paul the Apostle nailed these vicious people and he warned the Philippian believers to have nothing to do with these vile people.

As I sit here writing this commentary today and think about those vicious dog-acting Jews who came to do harm in Philippi, I can't help but remember the mess our entire world is in today because of the viciousness of Radical Islam which wants to take over the entire world and put us under Sharia Law. These, too, are vicious dogs who want to behead, drown, rape, humiliate and torture anyone that disagrees with them. They are lost blood-thirsty people who read from a false book called the Koran, whose author was a perverted pedophile whose favorite wife was a nine year old girl. Yet, America has had a recent president who can't even bring himself to mention Radical Islam because he came from a Muslim background, and because he knows nothing about genuine Christian conversion. Yet, thousands of Christians have been killed while others have been tortured by these evil people. And truthfully, no one seems to have the courage to address the problem because of fear. We desperately

need a modern-day Paul who will step to the forefront and cry out about these dogs and wolves that are clothed in sheepskins.

2. One must resist the enemy's methods (Evil workers). v. 2b

The term "evil workers" tell us that these vile legalistic Jews who came to Philippi were not just passive people who believed differently, but these were aggressive workers who had set out to destroy the true doctrine Paul and others had taught in the church at Philippi. And folks, it is very important that we never forget that Satan's cohorts never take a passive role anywhere in the world, especially inside the church. So, Paul warned his dear friends in Philippi to not only beware of these evil workers, but I believe he told the people to reject the message of these dogs and not allow them any leadership role. And, as Paul has said in others places in the Bible, if these evil workers didn't stop corrupting the church, they should be put out of the church and not allowed to remain there as a festering cancer.

3. One must resist the enemy's mutilation (Concision) v. 2c

The word concision is basically a repetitious way for Paul to mention these dogs and evil workers that had come to the church to cause harm. In fact, there seems to be a lot of sarcasm in the word that Paul now uses for the rite of circumcision. The word used here literally means to "mutilate" which leads me to believe that Paul was attacking these phony legalistic Jews by telling the Philippian believers that these Jews had been awfully mutilated, but they never had real salvation. We must beware of those who teach false legalistic religion which they declare must be added on to salvation to be completely saved. One illustration of this is the many churches that teach that salvation has to have baptism as a part of the quest for salvation. Some advocate sprinkling or pouring, while others require immersion. And yet, neither of these methods of baptism have any part in a person's salvation. **"For by grace are ye saved through faith; and that not of yourselves: it is the gift of God: Not of works, lest any man should boast." (Ephes. 2:8-9).** Folks, there is no ritual of any kind which we need to add to simple faith and repentance in order for us to get saved. But for sure, we need to truly examine ourselves to see if we have the real thing. And, we must beware of and stay away from those who bring false doctrine and try to confuse the simplicity of the Gospel message.

C. This precaution demands that one refrain from the flesh. v. 3

Verse three is an extension of Paul's thoughts in the previous verse concerning circumcising the flesh. In that verse he talks about the significance of circumcising the flesh to make a covenant vow with God like Abraham did in the Book of Genesis. But the problem in the church at

Philippi was that false teachers probably from Jerusalem came to Philippi demanding that all people who professed Christ as Savior should also be circumcised in order to complete their salvation. But here in verse three, Paul tells the believers that circumcision for the child of God is a spiritual renunciation or crucifixion of the flesh. The point Paul is trying to get across to the people was that once a person gets saved, then daily they are required to renounce the flesh in order to live spiritually and yes, even worship God. Let's look at verse three and learn three great lessons.

1. Refraining from the flesh demands the proper reverence. v. 3a

What Paul tries so hard to get across to the Philippians is that unless a person lives a life of refraining from the flesh, that person cannot have the proper respect in order to worship God. Why? Because sin stands in the way of genuine worship from a person's heart. Therefore, before a person really worships and gets in tune with God, there has to be a willful decision to not commit the sins of the flesh. It is impossible to have non-interrupted fellowship with God unless one lives a righteous life. This is not talking about sinless perfection, but it is talking about having a righteous lifestyle and holy testimony.

2. Refraining from the flesh demands the proper rejoicing. v. 3b

The second thing Paul mentions in this verse is that in our flesh there is no reason to rejoice, but our rejoicing should be in the Person of our Lord Jesus Christ and what He has done in our lives. As we will see in the next couple verses, it is very obvious that the false teachers that have been mentioned in verse two were arrogant and ego-centered to the point that they were trying to convince the Philippian believers that they were greater than the Apostle Paul and the other teachers. But Paul warns them in verse four if anyone had reason to rejoice in the flesh because of their accomplishments in the flesh, then he did. But yet, he never let this be a reason for rejoicing. His rejoicing was in Christ alone!

3. Refraining from the flesh demands the proper renunciation. v. 3c
(Rom. 7:18)

In the latter part of verse three, Paul reminds the Philippian believers that he has no confidence in the flesh at all. In fact, what he states here is an addendum to what he said in **Romans 7:18** when he was describing the struggle with the flesh that every child of God has. Therefore, instead of having to endure the circumcision of the flesh as the false Jewish were teaching, Paul said that we need to renounce our fleshly desires, attitudes and actions as a spiritual act of circumcision. He in fact states in the next few verses that if any one would have the right to boast about their standing religiously

before God, it could be him because of his faithful dedication as a lost Jewish man who set out to destroy Christianity. But, because Paul got gloriously saved, he then knew that all of the Jewish rites and rituals were nothing compared to his new-found faith in Christ. It was truly not a burden for him to crucify the flesh, but he saw it as a privilege. This should also be our attitude toward renouncing the works of the flesh. This has to be done in order to maintain a holy lifestyle and testimony. May we go forward with the same determination that Paul did in order to overcome the works of the flesh.

II. NOTICE PAUL'S PEDIGREE. vs. 4-6

As we study these next few verses, I think it would be good for me to give you the meaning of the word pedigree. In Webster's Dictionary we find that the word pedigree refers to the background or ancestry of an individual. Therefore, in these three verses, Paul tells the Philippian believers that if the false Jewish teachers wanted to brag about their religious resumes, his would truly make theirs look sick, but yet, all in our past doesn't mean anything if we are not living righteous and holy lives now. So, it is not about who we used to be in the past, but it is about our credentials in the present. Thus, we need to make sure that we discover what Paul is really trying to say in these three verses.

A. Paul's pedigree revealed pride in ritual. vs. 4-5a (Circumcised the eighth day)

Paul just tells the Philippian believers that he was circumcised the eighth day according to the Old Testament covenant of God with Abraham and all of his descendants. If he had chosen to, Paul could have boasted about his obedience to this covenant ritual. And by the way, this was the major issue with the false Jewish teachers who demanded that all non-Jewish people be circumcised in order to be completely saved. Paul just truly attacked them where it would hurt the most.

B. Paul's pedigree revealed pride in relationship. v. 5b (Of the stock of Israel)

In this phrase, Paul reminds the Philippians that he was not a proselyte Gentile Jew, but that he had been born into the stock or nation of Israel. Thus, he could have bragged about his Jewish heritage, but this had nothing to do with salvation. The Jews may have been God's chosen nation collectively as a nation, but when it comes to salvation, they have no priority with God. There are not two ways to get saved, just one for all Jews and Gentiles.

C. Paul's pedigree revealed pride in respectability. v. 5c (Of the tribe of Benjamin)

The tribe of Benjamin was one of the most prominent tribes in all of Israel. According to Dr. John MacArthur's Commentary on Philippians, Pages 229-230, we discover who Benjamin truly was. " He was the last of Jacob's sons

to be born and the only one born in the Promised Land. When the Northern Kingdom was taken over by the Assyrians, the tribe of Benjamin was one of the two tribes remaining in the Southern Kingdom. The other tribe was Judah. So, being from the tribe of Benjamin gave Saul of Tarsus great credentials and tremendous respect from the Jewish people; of course until he got gloriously saved on the road to Damascus to arrest and kill Christians.

D. Paul's pedigree revealed pride in race., v 5d (A Hebrew of the Hebrews)

Paul the Apostle was proud of his Jewish race, and before he got saved on the road to Damascus, he was so extremely proud that he was defending Judaism, and he felt strongly that he was doing God a favor by killing Christians and promoting the Jewish cause. Thus, Paul told the Philippian believers who were being influenced by arrogant false teachers (probably proselyte Jews from Jerusalem), that if anyone had reason to boast about their race, he could because of his heritage as a Jew, and because of his outward defense of the Jews. So, Paul was just reminding the believers in Philippi that those false teachers had nothing to boast about.

E. Paul's pedigree revealed pride in religion. v. 5e (As touching the law, a Pharisee)

In the latter part of this verse, Paul goes one step further and tells the believers in Philippi that not one of the false teachers could boast about their religiosity like he could because he had been so dedicated that he rose to the rank of a Pharisee. According to John MacArthur in his commentary on Philippians, page 231, "Paul the Apostle became a Pharisee so that he could reach the highest level in devout, legalistic Judaism." "The Pharisees were supremely devoted to the Law, including the Old Testament and all the traditions that had been added to it. In fact, the word Pharisee probably derives from a Hebrew verb meaning 'to separate', signifying that they were set apart to the Law." Ibid, page 231. "The term Law is not limited to the Pentateuch or the Old Testament, but includes the whole rabbinic system of prescriptions. Jesus said they had actually substituted those traditions for the Law of God (**Matt. 15:1-9**)." Ibid, page 231.

Therefore, Paul could say to the Christians in Philippi, "how could you be led away by false Jews, when he had been a devoted Jew all his life before he got gloriously saved on the road to Damascus. Truthfully, if any teacher deserved the respect an authentic teacher should receive, it should be Paul himself!

F. Paul's pedigree revealed pride in reputation. v. 6a (Concerning zeal, persecuting the church)

We now move on to verse six where Paul continues to rehearse his faithfulness to the Jewish cause by telling the believers that if any person ever had zeal or passion for Judaism, he did. But, in the next couple of verses as we will see, all of his pedigree meant nothing to Paul compared to his

relationship with Christ. And, may I interject here that Paul's reputation now as a faithful servant of God far exceeds the reputation he had as a devout and zealous Jew. My, how we need some passionate believers like Paul today.

G. Paul's pedigree revealed pride in righteousness. v. 6b (Touching the righteousness which is in the law, blameless)

In the latter part of verse six, Paul tells the Philippians that if anyone ever tried to walk righteously by man's efforts, then he was the man. He literally felt that he had lived a life in complete obedience to the Old Testament Law in such a way that no one could justifiably accuse him of anything. In fact, he had considered himself to be blameless. Yet, during that time of man-made piety, he had tried to arrest and kill every Christian he possibly could because he thought he was doing God a service. But as we are told in **Isaiah 64:6**, all of our man-made righteousness is as filthy rags. Therefore, Paul was never genuinely righteous until he got saved, and neither are we. We don't obey the laws and rules of God in order to get saved, but we obey the rules and laws of God as a result of coming to Christ. And, this obedience is not because obligation, but it is because of showing appreciation.

III. NOTICE PAUL'S PERSPECTIVE. vs. 7-9

As we come to Paul's third main point in this chapter on "Paul's Caution About Sensuality", we will discover the kind of eternal perspective that Paul had about his life, and yes, even the lives of others. We will see in these next few verses what was really important to Paul, and also, what should be our priorities as well as servants of God. Please don't miss what God is trying to show all of us through Paul's genuine experience.

A. Paul's perspective was the result of a past decision. v. 7

In verses 4-6 of our text, Paul distinctly described his past and the pride he could have had in who he had been, and also, in what he had done. But rather than being proud and arrogant about his accomplishments, Paul was truly humble and had a meek attitude about who he was and what he had done in the past. There was no gloating or flaunting of the flesh in Paul, just simply an attitude of contrition and an attitude of submission to the One he was now living for. Paul simply demonstrated a life of right priorities by saying that everything he had ever accomplished in the past was now considered nothing but dung or refuse, because his true riches were now in Christ. He no longer was concerned about being the Pharisee of the Pharisees, but he was just interested in being a humble servant of God.

Folks, we definitely need to stop and meditate upon the words Paul said in **I Timothy 6:6-7, when he said this, "But Godliness with contentment is great gain. For we brought nothing into this world, and it is certain we can carry nothing out."** This means that we need to stop and evaluate what is really precious and important to us. For sure, we came into the world

naked, and we brought nothing with us. And, it is obvious that when we leave, we will take nothing out. But yet, as my dear pastor in Florida, Dr. Homer Lindsay, Jr., used to say, "We brought nothing into this world, and we will take nothing out. Therefore, we must invest in the only things that are going to heaven, and the only things that are going to heaven are the souls of men, women, boys and girls." Therefore just like Paul, we need to come to the decision that from this day forth, we will only do and work toward winning people to Christ so that when we get to heaven, they will be there with us. Just try to imagine what a glorious day that will be when we get to spend all of eternity with those we have helped come to Christ in anticipation of that wonderful day when we can have our spiritual family reunion with those precious people. Truthfully, I just feel like shouting right now! Hallelujah! Praise God and the Lamb forever! What a privilege it is to be a part of this wonderful Kingdom work here on this earth. Have you made a decision to forget everything else, and make the King's work your work? I trust that you have, but if you have not, today would be a great day to do that!

B. Paul's perspective was the result of a present determination. v. 8

Earlier in Chapter one of this wonderful Book of Philippians, Paul stated in verse 21, **"For me to live is Christ, and to die is gain"**. Here in verse 8, he just reiterates this wonderful thought. You might say that Paul had all of the bases covered. Why? Because if Paul was to live a long life, even though he was in prison at the time of this writing, he knew that the goal of his life was to have a deeper experiential knowledge of Christ in his relationship with Him, and he had with much determination decided that even if God saw fit to let him die and take him home to heaven, that would be an even greater gain. I don't know about you my dear readers, but this is the way I want to live my life. I fail Jesus every day, but I do have a love for Him and I want Him and His work to be mine and my wife's priority as we continue our years of service. I say this because for 51 years she and I have travelled this road of service together, and Jesus has never failed us. And truthfully, the older we get, the more we realize that we are living on borrowed time and we will take nothing to heaven with us from down here when we go. Therefore, our priorities should be the priorities of our Savior, and we should have on our hearts what He has on His; the souls of men, women, boys and girls! So, my friends, I have determined with the help of Jesus to press on with the race while longing for the finish line and the day when we will receive the crowns which we can then lay at His feet.

C. Paul's perspective was the result of a present desire. v. 9

You might say, beloved friends, that this verse is a verse of confirmation for Paul. In it, he declares that his present desire back then when he was in a Roman prison was just simply to have and demonstrate the righteousness of Christ which had been given to him at the moment of his salvation, and not because of his loyal obedience to the Law. He had not worked to obtain the righteousness of God, but he worked hard to live righteously because of the

gift of righteousness which was given to him through his faith. You see folks, our present desire should be to manifest a truly righteous and holy life in order to show appreciation to the One Who gave us the gift of salvation. I don't work for Christ trying to get saved, but I work for Christ because I am saved. There is a world of difference!

IV. NOTICE PAUL'S PURSUIT. vs. 10-11

Well, I must confess to all of you readers that the next five verses in this chapter are the favorite verses in all of the Bible for this writer. They have been for many years, and they will be until the day I die. And very frankly, I am leaving instructions that these are the Scripture verses which I want the preacher to use at my funeral. Why? Because like Paul the Apostle, I want to continue to push on for the finish line until Christ is through with me. And, I am truly pressing for the finish line ribbon because this marathon is about over. I am truly not trying to be morbid, but I am simply a realist who wants to finish the race well for my Lord. And, as I keep running and pushing out my chest to try to hit that ribbon, I want to keep learning and growing until the race is over. This was what Paul desired, and this is the desire and pursuit of my life. As someone said years ago, "I'm too near home to turn back now". Let's study these next few verses and glean from what Paul had on his heart as he sat confined in a prison in Rome.

A. Paul's pursuit included a personal relationship. v. 10a

As we continue to look at this great passage of Scripture, I am just so overwhelmed at the passion that Paul exhibits as he reveals his personal pursuit. Please remember that Paul is still in prison in Rome living with the uncertainty of his future. Yet, the primary thing he is living for is to have a deeper relationship with his Lord Jesus Christ. In other words, the greatest desire of his heart and life was to become intimately related to the One Who had died for him, and the One with Whom he would spend eternity.

I would like to stop and interject something very personal here. I did not grow up in a dedicated Christian home. I grew up with a nominal Christian as a mother, and a lost father, who got saved later in life. Therefore, no one ever truly taught me how to develop an intimate relationship with Christ, but through much trial and error, I began to pursue a close fellowship with Jesus. But folks, there is one thing I genuinely know. God placed an insatiable desire in my heart to not only learn much about Jesus, but more important, He whetted my appetite for fellowship and intimacy with Him. Down through these many years I have struggled often with discouragement and yes, even depression, but there is one thing I really praise God for; that is my extreme desire to develop a greater intimacy with Christ. And therefore, as I am living my life on the upper end of my life, I, like Paul, want desperately to know Him more experientially than ever before.

B. Paul's pursuit included the power of resurrection. v. 10b

In the first part of this verse, we have discussed Paul's overwhelming desire to know Christ more and more experientially. Now, in the next part of this short verse, Paul tells the Philippian believers that he not only wants an intimate knowledge with Christ, but he also wants to live his life in the resurrection power of Christ. I remind you again that Paul was still in prison. Therefore, his suffering and trials must have been enormous. But, he was confident that if he had the power of the resurrected Lord, he would be able to overcome any trial or difficulty he had to face. So, he shared his desire with the believers in Philippi because he knew that they would surely pray that God might grant Paul this resurrection power.

So, what does it mean to live a Christian life in the power of the resurrected Lord? I tell you what it means! It means to live a life with victory over every trial, every problem, every disappointment, and yes, even depression. This does not mean that we will be free from these things, but it means that through the resurrected power of Jesus, we will rise out of and above all of these discouraging things that happen to us, and God will ultimately give us the victory.

Now, I would ask you, "Are you living the victorious Christian life?" If you aren't, then I can tell you the reason is that you are facing these battles in and with the power of the flesh and all that the flesh can provide. But, living the victorious life is not about our efforts in the flesh with secular knowledge and know-how, but it only comes through the power of Christ, the resurrected Lord. Paul just desired so much to live above his circumstances even there in a Roman prison. This should surely be our desires as well.

C. Paul's pursuit included participation in reproach. v. 10c

As we continue our study of verse 10, we are going to see a statement that I have never seen or heard made by any other believer. Paul continues his thought about his supreme pursuit and desire in life by telling the Philippian Christians that he wants to participate in the fellowship of sufferers who suffer for Christ's sake. Paul just wanted to endure the suffering the way Jesus endured it on the cross, and in the process of experiencing this suffering, he wanted to die to the desires of the flesh. Paul just knew that he would never be able to endure the suffering, even the Roman imprisonment, that he would have to go through for the sake of the Gospel without looking at it as a blessing from the Lord. Paul did not want others to have to suffer for the cause of Christ without him participating in the same thing. Obviously, Paul felt that suffering for Christ and handling it properly was the true mark of a believer. May I just say, what a man of God Paul truly was!

Now, my question is, "Are we ready to suffer for the cause of Christ so willingly as Paul was"? Are we praying that God will allow suffering to come our way so that we can show to others how to deal with it? Or, do we sincerely look at our trials and difficulties as an opportunity to identify with the suffering of our Lord? I pray that each of us may begin to look at the

suffering that comes our way as a privilege to demonstrate our total surrender to Christ in the midst of uncertain situations. And, instead of allowing our trials and hardships to make us bitter and doubt the faithfulness of God, may we view them as mere stepping stones to a greater glory which will ultimately come our way if we are suffering for Christ's sake. I know it is a hard thing for us to do, but may God truly help us to desire to participate in reproach and suffering for the Gospel sake so that others can see the true authenticity of our Christian testimony. Maybe I should just stop and ask the question, "Have you recently asked Jesus to let you suffer for His sake"? I don't think I have ever asked for this specifically, but I am praying that whatever God allows to come my way, that I will handle it in a dignified way as a born-again child of God. There is no greater testimony with lasting impact than the one who comes through suffering with a positive attitude and praise on his or her lips in spite of what they are going through. Will we suffer trials and reproach as children of God? You bet your life we will! The question is, "will we magnify and glorify the Lord in the midst of them"? I know that this is a supreme desire in my life, and I hope it is yours as well. We should just stop and praise God for the tremendous pursuit that Paul had concerning reproach and suffering!

D. Paul's pursuit included partnership in resignation. v. 10d

As we continue to explain verse 10, let me say that the word I have used in this point is the word "resignation". I have chosen this word intentionally because of the meaning of the Greek word "symmorphizdo" which literally means to become comfortable with a decision or process. Now folks, don't miss this! Paul was in a Roman prison when he made this statement that he was resigned to the fact that whatever suffering, and even death he had to experience, he would be comfortable with whatever God chose for him. This is truly an unbelievable statement which reveals the depths of Paul's commitment to Christ. I pray that God will give each of us this same resolve in order to resign ourselves to accept with comfort whatever God chooses for us here in this life as we serve Him. May we this very day ask Jesus to give us courage for this kind of resignation!

E. Paul's pursuit included procurement of rewards. v. 11

Early in this chapter three, Paul had stated that he was willing to give up everything he had and had accomplished before becoming a Christian for the sake of the Gospel. In verse 7, he said, "**But what thing were gain to me, those I counted loss for Christ.**" Paul had no desire to gather, hold on to, or even temporarily treasure anything he could receive or achieve in this world. Why? Because his heart and mind were set upon what was ahead for him at the time of the bodily resurrection at the beginning of the rapture of the church. He knew that whatever he had to suffer, whatever he had to lose, and whatever reward he could possibly receive here in this world, was nothing compared to the rewards that he would receive when the bodily resurrection takes place. Bear in mind that when he wrote these verses, he was confined to a prison, suffering without many of the necessities of life,

and no doubt, he had many physical and emotional pains from what he was going through. Therefore, he longed for the day when there would be no more suffering, no more imprisonment, no more pain, and no more death. He had his eyes and mind fixed on the best which was to come.

Hopefully, I won't sound too self-centered or ego-centric when I say what I am going to say, but folks, as I sit here this morning at my computer writing this commentary, I have chest pain in the center of my chest, severe pain in my left arm, and pain in many other areas of my old physical body. Truthfully, I rarely ever have a day without a lot of pain. Therefore, like Paul the Apostle, I too long for the day when Christ comes again to resurrect the saints from the graves, like this verse points to, when there will no longer be suffering, sickness, pain, hospitals, the need for medicine, or even funeral homes. Just yesterday, my wife and I attended the funeral of a 51 year old Christian man who was found dead by his wife when she came home. He was a dynamic believer with a tremendous testimony. And, while I was at the funeral service, I was just reminded once more "that soon and very soon, we are going to see the King". What a day of remarkable bliss that will be! Brother Paul, I too long for the day of the resurrection and the rewards that our Savior and Lord will have for us!

V. NOTICE PAUL'S PRIZE. vs. 12-14

As we move on in our study of this third chapter, we are going to take a look at verses 12-14. Personally, I believe these three verses are some of the most important verses in the entire Book of Philippians. I say this because in these verses Paul tells the Philippian believers that his vision is on the prize that awaits him when he finishes the race that he had been running ever since he got saved on the Damascus Road. Paul had truly been faithful all along the way, and now from inside the Roman prison, he just reminds the believers in Philippi that he had not yet achieved everything he wanted to achieve, but that he was still pressing onward for that prize until his race would be over. Paul just simply kept his eyes fixed on the finish line of the race knowing fully well that when he arrived home, everything that he had suffered along the race course, would be worth while when he saw Jesus. Paul's encouragement came from within and from what was ahead of him. Therefore, he made up his mind to keep running until the race was ended. Let's take a look at these three verses and see what God is trying to show us so that we too can complete the race.

A. Notice an honest admission concerning the prize. vs. 12a and 13a.

In the first phrase of verse 12, Paul tells the Philippians that he recognized that he had not attained what he had hoped to achieve. And, he readily admitted that his race had not been perfect or complete, but he was determined to keep running until he did accomplish what God wanted him to accomplish.

Then, in the first part of verse 13, Paul says, "**Brethren, I count not myself**

to have apprehended:..." This is a very unusual statement, but one with much meaning. Paul was saying that he had never achieved what he should have achieved up to this point, and he felt bad about this because he had not fulfilled the purpose for which God saved and called him. It truly is obvious to me that Paul felt that he had left undone much of what he should have done, and by not accomplishing what he should have, maybe Jesus had not gotten His money's worth when He saved Paul and put him into the ministry.

Now, before you question the veracity of what I have just said, let me admonish you to stop and consider whether you have reached your potential for Christ since the day He saved you, and then placed you in a position of service. You see folks, I believe that the majority of believers in this life never come anywhere near reaching their God-given potential because of a lack of total surrender and commitment to the call of God. Therefore, I believe we should step to the forefront and admit that we have not reached our potential, but with this confession, we should become more resolved and dedicated to doing better with the rest of our race. In other words, we should be determined to make a greater impact with the Gospel with whatever time we have left. I know this is my desire, and I pray it is yours as well. But please remember, you will never accomplish more if you don't honestly admit where you have failed. Paul did this without hesitation, and so should we.

B. Notice a hearty attempt to win the prize. v. 12b

In the second part of verse 12, Paul reveals to us his resolute desire and determination to accomplish that for which God saved him, and he was determined to keep looking ahead, to keep working diligently, and to eventually make Jesus very proud of him. If you would, please stop and meditate upon this very thought. The only thing that Paul wanted was to fulfill God's perfect will for his life, and to make Jesus proud of him for the price that He had paid for him on the cross. There seemed to be nothing else on the mind of Paul except to complete the race and bring pleasure to the heart of Jesus by the kind of race he had run. By finishing the race faithfully, then Christ would know that His choice of Paul as His servant was not in vain.

Folks, just try to imagine what a tremendously larger harvest of souls we would be winning if all of God's servants had the same attitude in determination that Paul did. Instead of us living in a world with seven billion people, with a huge portion who have never heard the simple plan of salvation, we would be seeing multitudes more come to Christ. But, the problem is not in those who might reject the Gospel, but the problem is in the lives of those who are not focused on running the race properly in order that the world might hear the Good News. I am simply saying that we have had too many runners who have fallen by the wayside on the race to the finish line. And I would add, a lot of these who are no longer in the race are

out just simply because they were too busy watching other runners in the race instead of keeping their focus on the finish line.

This was so vividly illustrated many years ago when I was one day watching a large marathon race. There were scores of people in the race, but one runner in particular stands out in my mind. This runner was an African from the country of Kenya. He was really running the race and just before the runners were to get to the finish line, this African man was leading the race. But then, he made a tragic mistake. I remember seeing him turn his head to the right to see where the other runners were. At the very moment he turned to see where his competitors were, another man forged ahead of him and won the race. This is what so many believers do. They start running the race well, but then, for whatever reasons they begin to focus on the other runners to see how they are doing, and thus, they get their eyes off of the finish line. You see folks, we should never try to measure up to our competitors, but we should just always keep focused on Jesus and the finish line. If we run like this, then we will receive the prize and approval from the only One that matters. So, what kind of race are you now running? Just remember that the race is about over. So, let's be faithful with our eyes on the ribbon and the face of our Lord Jesus. To hear Him say, "Well done thou good and faithful servant will be worth everything we have had to endure along the race course." Let's just keep running!

C. Notice a holy aspiration to win the prize. vs. 13-14

In **Revelation 4:11**, we are told that everything and every person that God ever created was for the purpose of bringing glory and pleasure to the heart of God. This is exactly what I see in verses 13-14 where Paul says, "I have forgotten those things which are behind, and I am pressing out my chest and bearing down in this race toward the finish line in order to receive the best prize I can, and to bring pleasure to the heart of God." Paul's focus was on the finish line and the eternal reward he would receive. His goal was the prize which would mean his final completion in Christ Jesus, and all of the perfection that God had in store for Paul and all us. Just think about that tired, sweating, aching, and thirsty runner who reaches the finish line, and then to be awarded the best prize of new energy, plenty of water from the well of salvation, and complete likeness to Jesus Christ Who died for us to purchase our eternal salvation, and then, gave us the high calling to be used in His service. LISTEN FRIENDS, WE CANNOT QUIT RUNNING UNTIL WE CROSS THE FINISH LINE! WHY? BECAUSE THE DIGNITY AND GLORY OF THE ONE WHO CALLED US IS AT STAKE! There has never been, and never will be, a higher calling than the one Christ has given to us. Therefore, all of the Philippian believers, and every believer today should never get over the wonder of being called by the incarnate Christ of heaven! If you don't realize the significance of the race that you are in, my beloved friends, then maybe you need to examine your hearts and see if you really are saved. When God really saves a person with genuine salvation, He places within that person an aspiration to finish the race and bring pleasure to the heart of Jesus. My

friends, are you making Jesus happy by your faithfulness in the race? If not, why don't stop your study of this passage and get down on your knees and completely surrender your life to finishing the race well!

VI. NOTICE PAUL'S PERFECTION. vs. 15-21 (maturity)

We have already come to the conclusion that although Paul the Apostle was in a Roman prison and was uncertain about his earthly future, he was still very meek and humble about the fact that he had never arrived in perfection or the maturity in Christ that he longed for. Of course, this should be the very same attitude that all of us demonstrate, even if we have been in the service of our Lord for more than a half-century like myself. We will never become all that we can be until we reach the finish line and be rewarded with perfect and complete maturity in Christ. But, may our goal be to strive for and keep pushing toward that wonderful day when the race is run and we participate in the celebration. Let's now take a look at Paul's desire for perfection or maturity and learn to follow his example!

A. Notice the exhortation to go on to perfection. vs. 15-16

Let's look at these two verses and see what Paul was telling the Philippian believers, and what he is telling us today. First in verse 15, Paul says, let us go on toward perfection or maturity and make this our goal in life as a believer. He also implies that if this is to happen, we must have the right mind set toward this, and not have our minds on other things. He even tells the Christian believers in Philippi that if they are serious about going on to perfection, they might need to ask Jesus to show them what is in their lives that should not be there, or maybe they need to get new priorities on their minds and in their lives which will take them on to maturity.

In verse 16, Paul says that it might be necessary for the believers to stop for a moment and think about where they have come from, and what kind of disciplined lifestyle brought them to this point of growth in their lives. And, if they are not growing the way they should be, then maybe the believers should restore some of the previous disciplines and deeds which had helped them to grow in the past. This just seems to me that Paul felt that some of the believers in Philippi were not growing like they used to, and it could very well be that this was the reason they were being led astray by false teachers. We will see this for sure in the next verse when Paul tells the Philippians to mark those false teachers in their midst, and have nothing to do with them. In reading between the lines, I believe Paul was implying that the lack of growth in some of the people was the result of hanging out with the wrong people. And, I will say that this is usually the main reason most Christians don't grow and never ever aspire to growth. They are perfectly content with making a profession of faith in Christ, but only so far as to get "eternal fire insurance", and not to give up the world and live a holy life of growth and development. And beloved friends, this is why there are so many people in the modern church who are stunted in their growth and they have no desire to win the world to Christ.

B. Notice the example to follow on the way to perfection. v. 17

In the first part of verse seventeen, Paul does a very confident thing. He tells the Philippian believers that they needed to follow his example as a man of God, and to pay attention to those in their midst who were following Paul's example. They were not to pattern their lives after the phonies and hypocrites who chose their friends by compatible sins. They were not to idolize Paul and the other devoted teachers and Christians, but they were to imitate their lives in order to bring praise to God.

I believe this would be a good time for me to mention one of the major causes of division in the modern church. That is that many professing believers hang out with other phony professing believers who excuse their own negligence and disobedience, and thereby lead to developing a faction to oppose the good leadership of the church, and any of the genuinely sold-out Christians who try to serve God faithfully. The reason they cluster together is that they have developed their own fantasy world of Christian service whereby they can live any way they want to, and yet go to heaven (they think) when they die. Thus, many times friction develops in the church over selfish and egotistical desires, rather than trying to follow Christ and keep growing in the Lord. Personally, I believe these people are not genuinely saved, but are merely professing hypocrites who could care less about unity in the body of Christ if it means they can't have their own sinful selfish ways. May God see fit to deliver us from these kind of phonies, and may we mark them like Paul states in the next verse.

C. Notice the enemies that must be contended with while striving for perfection. vs. 18-19

Beloved folks, wouldn't it be wonderful if while we are trying to pursue growth and development in our Christian lives if we didn't have to contend with so many of these phonies and hypocrites like Paul mentions in verses 18-19? Yet, everyday that we live, we face these "enemies of the cross" that pretend to be followers of Christ, and yet they don't even have the genuine presence of the Holy Spirit on the inside of them. It would surely be enough for us to have the opposition of those lost in the world that never profess Christ, but it seems that our biggest opponents are within the watchcare and membership of the local church. At least, this has been my experience down through my 51 years of ministry.

It is very obvious to me that God wanted us to get this message that Paul sent to the Philippian believers about the "enemies of the cross" who were in the church at Philippi, or He would not have inspired and sanctioned these words in the Inspired Word of God. Therefore, Jesus wanted us to know that the biggest enemies we would have in our quest for growth and development in the Christian life would be the Pharisaical religious people who live phony lives.

Paul says in verse 19 that these religious phonies are the people who

pretend to be saved, but in fact, they are lost and will end in destruction in the fires of hell. These people live for one thing, and that is to satisfy the desires of their own narcissistic self-centered behavior, and to try their best to get all of the attention and glory they possibly can. And, I believe this self-centered quest for glory comes from their own insecurity and emptiness because they don't have the real Christ living in their hearts. Thus, we are seeing every sort of dress, behavior, false doctrine, and weird presentations in our so-called Christian churches today just to try to get an audience or crowd to see them. They seek their glory, rather than the glory of God. And, Paul says that their motives and behavior stems from their obedience and adherence to the world's system. These people would much rather have the applause of men, than the approval of God. Of course Jesus said, **"Therefore when thou doest thine alms, do not sound a trumpet before thee, as the hypocrites do in the synagogues and the streets, that they may have glory of men. Verily I say unto you, They have their rewards" (Matthew 6:4).** What Jesus says here is that if we serve from the wrong motive to be seen of men, then the only rewards that we will receive will be the applause and glory of men. And, Paul says in verse 19, that this kind of illegitimate behavior turns their glory in to shame and embarrassment.

So beloved friends, we need to desperately stay away from these hypocrites who make long prayers, try to sell themselves as great Christians, and all that they do is for their own show and glory. And, I believe we need to not only point these people out to our congregations, but we need to use discipline and not allow these "enemies of the cross" to contaminate good people in the fellowship of believers. We need to warn all of our people to stay away from these phonies, but don't be surprised if you lose some good people in dealing with the bad people because the bad people always take good people down with them if they can. This is always the way Satan works in our churches.

D. Notice the expectation which is fulfilled in a life of perfection. vs. 20-21

We now come to the conclusion of chapter three of Philippians. These last two verses are tremendous verses from which we should get encouragement and expectancy on our quest for perfection and maturity. Yes, even with all of the phonies who are straight from the pits of hell, we have the hope of a glorious heaven when Jesus comes again. This is all possible for us because at the moment we get saved, we become a citizen to two worlds. The one is down here on earth where we live, and the other citizenship is in heaven where we one day will go. In verse 20, the old English word "conversation" actually meant citizenship and not verbal conversation. Therefore, Paul was telling the Philippians and even us today that we should be filled with expectancy because of Whose we are, and because of where we are going. We truly belong to Jesus if we have been saved, and we can look to the sky because Jesus will soon return from the beautiful place called heaven. Although we might have some different beliefs about where heaven is today, we do know for certain that Jesus is up there waiting to come again at the Father's command. Because of this truth, we

should be living with expectancy and excitement because He is coming again. What a blessed day that will be!

When Jesus does return again, Paul says that we will have new changed bodies from the vile flesh we live in, unto brand new glorified bodies just like the body of Jesus after the resurrection. There will be no more pain, sorrow, suffering, sickness, or any other ailment for this house of clay we dwell in. If we are like the glorified resurrected body of Jesus, we will be recognizable, be able to walk, converse with others, eat food, and even pass through closed doors like Jesus did in these brand new bodies. And again, there will be no sickness or suffering. All of this is possible because Jesus has all power in heaven and earth, and He can subdue all our diseases, cancel out all of our problems, and provide for us a perfect place to house our perfect bodies which we will receive when He comes again. You readers know that I got somewhat excited back earlier in this commentary, but right now, I feel so excited that I think I will just run a mile or two. On second thought, maybe I better wait to get my glorified body because I now have heart trouble! So, I will just shout glory hallelujah and wait for the new body!

I want to close this third chapter about Paul's warning to the Philippian believers about worldly sensuality, and the lack of Christian growth. I believe one of the greatest fears that Paul had while in his first imprisonment in Rome was that he would never reach his potential in his Christian service. He wanted so much to end his race well, and then be rewarded when he received his new glorified body. Yet, I think it is so discouraging to see so many professing believers in this generation of believers never seem to have a desire to really grow in the Lord and reach their potential. I suppose we could say that if they really have been saved, they are still babes in Christ, and they never grew any from their point of salvation.

I believe this last point may be vividly illustrated by a story I read about many years ago. One night a little boy went to bed and before daylight the next morning, he accidentally fell out of his bed. His mother in another room heard the noise of the fall, and she came running to check on him. She said to her son, "why do you think you fell out of bed"? He responded very distinctly, "I don't know mummie, unless it was because I went to sleep too near to where I got in." Folks, maybe this is the reason that so many people never really grow in the Lord or reach their potential. Maybe they just went to sleep too close to where they got in!

"Paul's Contentment In The Midst Of Scarcity"

Scripture: Philippians 4:1-23

Today as we begin the final chapter in our study of the Book of Philippians, I think we need to reflect back upon a few of the many things we have learned up to this point from Paul's letter to the Philippian believers. First, in chapter one Paul talked about his imprisonment in Rome and how God would turn this into something good for him and the proclamation of the Gospel. He also discussed those in the church of Philippi who were preaching the Gospel from the wrong motives and causing contention in the flock in Philippi, and probably also casting aspersion on the ministry of Paul. No doubt, they were saying if Paul was a true man of God, then why would God allow him to be imprisoned several hundred miles away in Rome.

Then in chapter two Paul discussed the problem that some of the Philippian Christians were having with a non-servant-like spirit. They had come to the point where there was definitely some ego problems in the church, and Paul addressed this by talking about how Jesus had given up all of heaven to come down to this earth and was born in a lowly manger, and then lived as a servant of God the Father and man until He died on the cross, was buried for three days, and then ascended back to heaven.

Also, in chapter three we learned from Paul that there were some religious Jews who had probably travelled all the way from Jerusalem to Philippi to stir up trouble about circumcision and the necessity of adding this covenant ritual to faith and repentance in order to become completely saved. These people were so bad that Paul called them ravaging dogs because of the damage they were doing to the cause of Christ and the unity of the church. He later indicated that these people were also enemies of the cross and needed to be avoided at all cost.

So, in each of the first three chapters, Paul addressed some serious problems in the church at Philippi. Now as we begin the exposition of chapter four, the first thing we see is that Paul has to deal with more division in the church caused by two women, Euodias and Syntyche. Obviously, they were having a squabble over something which was causing confusion and division in the body of Christ. Paul begs them to stop this foolishness, and get right with one another and also with God.

But now, we come to the supreme thought in this fourth chapter which is that Paul was reflecting on his present condition of being in prison and being in such need. In this chapter, he tells the believers in **Philippians 4:12** the following words. This is what he says. **"I know both how to be abased, and I know how to abound: every where in all things I am instructed both to be full and to be hungry, both to abound and to suffer need."** Paul was just emphatically telling the Philippian Christians that in spite of his terrible situation and depravation, he was perfectly contented and totally depending upon the source and supply of God. His contentment and peace in this terrible situation was the result of his confidence in the promises of God. Therefore, as we take a verse by verse look at this chapter, let us learn how to also be perfectly contented in our times of much, and in our times of scarcity. Let's now dig deep and get the great truth of this last chapter.

I. NOTICE THE PROBLEMS PAUL MENTIONS. vs. 1-4

A. First, there is the problem of defeatism. v. 1

In this first verse, Paul lovingly and compassionately calls the believers in Philippi his brethren, and he tells them that he loves them and longs to see them. He also tells them that they are his pride and joy, and if he gets a crown for any church where he planted, it would be for his work at Philippi. This reminds me of what I heard another preacher say sometime ago. He said that he thought the Philippian church was Paul's favorite. And, may I say that I am inclined to agree with him. Paul dearly loved these believers as if they were his own children. And, if we consider how Paul had suffered so much trial and agony in planting the church in Philippi, we can readily understand why it was his favorite. When one suffers the way Paul did with Silas in Philippi as described in **Acts 16**, then most assuredly, this suffering would endear the people and the church collectively to Paul. Therefore, Paul writes these precious people to encourage them not to be defeated because they were having problems in the church, and because he was away from them in a Roman prison. He sincerely wanted the saints at Philippi to rise above their circumstances and claim the victory that was theirs in and through the Lord Jesus Christ. Surely, if he could rejoice in the Lord with contentment in the midst of his suffering and scarcity, then they ought to be able to rejoice and praise God in spite of what they were going through.

B. Secondly, there is the problem of disunity. v. 2

There is no wonder the people in the Philippian church were discouraged. On the one side, they were discouraged because their pastor and church founder was away in prison, but now they had a quarrel going on between two ladies in the church as I mentioned earlier in the introduction to this chapter. These ladies' names were Euodias and Syntyche.

Very little is known about these two women in the church. But, we do know that they were members of the church, and both of them had probably heard Paul preach and teach at some point. I say this because Paul seemed to be comfortable with addressing the situation, which he may not have been so blunt and called their names, if he were not close to them. Also, it seems to be implied that their dispute was not a doctrinal issue, because if it had been, then Paul would have taken sides in the argument. So, we must conclude that their problem was a social relationship problem that they had just not dealt with. And the sad point is that they were probably well-respected women in the church which would indicate the serious damage which could have been done if the followers in the church would have chosen up sides and then split the church. There is never a place to allow or tolerate disunity in the body of Christ. If the problems are not dealt with, then they will fester and become bigger and bigger and do irreparable damage to the cause of Christ.

Having been a pastor for over 51 years, I can distinctly remember some men and women in the churches where I have pastored that can only be remembered for the damage they did to the body of Christ. They will always be remembered for dividing the flock, discouraging the body, and yes sad to say, they will be remembered for contributing to some lost people dying

without Christ and going to a burning hell. I say this so strongly because of my personal experiences as a pastor by which I saw so many people hurt and the progress of the church stymied or stopped because of this unseemly and wicked behavior. May God have pity for and extend mercy to those who because of their self-centered ego-centric attitudes determine that they will have their ways regardless of the damage they might cause to the body of believers.

C. Thirdly, there is problem of destitution. v. 3

In this third verse we run into somewhat of a problem. It would seem that the situation between Euodias and Syntyche had gotten so bad that some of the church leaders had stepped back out of the picture, and therefore, this is no doubt why Paul had received word about the difficult situation. The situation had become so bad that the leaders of the church just saw it as a hopeless case of destitution. They just didn't know what to do about it. Therefore, Paul calls a man there in the church, "true yokefellow". There is some argument about the meaning of this name and who he may have been. But in the Greek New Testament, the name "yokefellow" literally means the word Suzugos. This word ordinarily was a name for an individual man. The term means one who helped bear burdens. So, I believe that this "true yokefellow" was indeed a man name Suzugos, and probably was one of the true pastors of the Philippian church. Paul wanted this pastor to take charge of the situation and help these women to settle the problem between themselves. Paul compliments the good these ladies had done in the past working with him and Clement, probably another church leader, and with a large number of fellow-laborers who had helped with the church plant and ministry. And, Paul reminded Suzugos and the others that they all were in the same family because they had their names in the book of life (Lamb's Book Of Life) which is the book where all saved people have their names sealed there.

D. Fourthly, there is the problem of depression. v. 4

I don't mean to read more into the situation in Philippi than actually existed. But, the people must have really been in depression over the disunity and the unsolved problem there. I say this because in the same verse, Paul tells them to rejoice always in every situation, and then repeats himself by saying again, "rejoice". Therefore, I conclude that the depression and discouragement had probably gotten the people's minds off of their vision to win people to Christ, which of course, is what a church is supposed to be doing. So, Paul gives them an emphatic command to rejoice, and may I add, solve the problem, get over it, and go on with the work. Yet, my beloved friends, all over the world there are churches that are constantly fighting unnecessary battles and hindering the work of evangelism and world missions, just simply because of selfish people who want their way rather than give themselves to His way.

II. NOTICE THE PEACE PAUL MENTIONS. vs. 5-9

In verse 5-9, Paul gives a tremendous and precise statement about why peace was so needed in the Philippian church, and yes, why it is so needed in every church today. It is truly obvious to me that Paul did sincerely love the Philippian people, and he wanted them to live in peace and give attention to the objective of a church; that being to win people to Christ. Disunity not only brings discord and division, but it also prevents fruitfulness in the harvest field. So, as we take a careful look at these next few verses, let us learn how to get peace, keep peace, and then what peaceful believers should be doing.

A. Notice the requirements for peace. vs. 5-6

1. The first requirement is pliability. v. 5

Paul's statement in this verse tells us that in order for there to be peace, believers should conduct themselves with a spirit of moderation. The word moderation here actually means "gentleness" in behavior. Therefore, it is very evident that people will not be fighting each other if they have a spirit of gentleness. And, I need to add that there can be no spirit of gentleness unless there is reconciliation between opposing parties which brings this gentle spirit. A gentle person doesn't always have to be right, and neither does he or she have to have the final word.

We need to see that a gentle person is very pliable and flexible in dealing with problems. Thus, there is room for receiving and giving. Flexibility is a marvelous trait for a believer, except in the areas of fundamental doctrine and truth, and also in the area of living righteously. If a person is flexible or pliable in these areas, then he or she becomes too tolerant and permissive with what they believe and the way they live. As we see so often today in the modern church, pliability in the wrong areas end up producing political correctness which is a curse on our modern society.

Please notice one last thing here in this verse. Paul finalizes this thought about having the proper spirit of gentleness by reminding the Philippians that the coming of Christ was at hand. Therefore, this is a reminder that Jesus would one day come, and every child of God will be held accountable for the kind of spirits we display. I don't know about you folks, but this truly is a solemn thought to me that Jesus will hold each of us accountable at the Bema Seat of Christ for our spirit and deportment. We need to make sure we are right in these areas because if Paul the Apostle thought Jesus would soon return 2,000 years ago, how much closer are we to His return today. So, we better get ready to meet Him. Who knows, He may come before I finish writing this commentary.

2. The second requirement is prayer. v. 6a

Paul starts out verse six by encouraging the Philippian believers to not worry or fret over the things they could not change, or the problems they could not solve. He instructed them to just be careful about becoming a worry wart, instead of a prayer warrior. My, this is a truth that all of us need to apply to our lives. In the Sermon On The Mount found in **Matthew 6**, Jesus told the people to not worry about what they had to wear, their food to eat, their water to drink, or even the stature or welfare of their bodies. Instead, they were to, "**seek first the kingdom of God, and His righteousness; and these other things would be added unto them**". (**Matthew 6:33**) In other words, folks, we are to stop worrying about the daily necessities of life, but give our attention first to the Kingdom of God and righteous living, and Jesus has obligated Himself to take care of us just like He does the fowls of the air, the lilies of the fields, the fish of the seas and rivers, and also, the grass of the fields.

So, if we are not to worry, what are we supposed to do? Well, the answer to this is that we should fervently pray. We are to pray about everything with specific supplications asking God our Father to meet every need that we have. This doesn't mean that we will get everything we will ask for, but it does mean that no genuine need will go unmet.

3. The third requirement is petition. v. 6b

Hopefully, I won't sound too repetitious, but the word for request in this verse is the word for petition. It just simple means that when we have a need, instead of worrying and fretting, we should just specifically ask God to provide what we need. It is very evident that the people Paul was writing were fretful and concerned about the absence of peace in their flock of church people, and so Paul basically said, "**...Ye have not because you ask not.**" (**James 4:2**) They were probably fretting, but weren't praying, and therefore, they needed admonishment.

4. The fourth requirement is praise. v. 6c

In the last part of this verse, Paul tells the believers that when they pray, they need to pray with a confident spirit of thanksgiving knowing by faith that God will answer and provide what we ask; even the peace that is often taken away because of broken relationships as was the case in the Philippian church. We as God's children are the only people on earth that can offer thanksgiving in advance because we know that if God has saved us, He truly can meet our every need. Therefore, let's give Him the praise by faith even before the prayers and petitions are granted.

B. Notice the results of peace. vs. 7-9

1. The first result is a guard against improper thinking. v. 7

In this great verse, Paul tells the Philippian believers when God answers their prayers and provides peace in the midst of trials and uncertainties, this peace is so unique that we can't even believe it is real, and it is beyond understanding. And, although we can't understand the depths of this peace, we can have our minds guarded from every kind of hopeless and helpless thinking. We can rejoice when others are not. We can understand the Sovereignty of God when others do not. Because of this wonderful peace, we can think only of the goodness of God rather than the cruelty of God. You might say that in the midst of inexplicable difficulties, we can think and speak thoughts of eternal value, rather than be mystified and confused about what is going on. So, may I ask you this question. "If you are going through difficulties right now, how is your thinking?" Are you thinking properly as a believer, or are you thinking wrong thoughts because you haven't turned the situation over to the Lord? If the latter is true, may God give you the grace, strength, and faith to give it to Jesus, so that you can experience that special peace that is beyond understanding.

2. The second result is the guarantee of innocent thinking. v. 8

Since Paul tells the Philippian Christians how to overcome improper thinking in verse 7, in verse eight he gives them the truth of what they should be thinking about. They should be pondering or meditating upon true things or truth. Of course, the truth can only come from the Word of God. They didn't have the New Testament in the Philippian church, but they did have the Old Testament, and so their true thinking should be about the Word.

I love the way Dr. John MacArthur describes this command of Paul about having thoughts that are proper and innocent before God. Let's take a look at a section of his commentary on the Book of Philippians, page 290.

- a. "Thinking on whatever is true means reading, analyzing, and meditating on the Word of God." Page 290
- b. Second, "believers are to think on whatever is honorable, whatsoever is noble, dignified, and worthy of respect." Page 290. "Believers must not think on what is trivial, temporal, mundane, common, and earthly, but rather on what is heavenly, and so worthy of awe, adoration, and praise." Page 290.
- c. Third, "believers are to think on whatever is right." The word right means righteous, and it describes whatever is in perfect harmony with God's eternal, unchanging standards, again as
Page 66

- revealed in the Scriptures". Page 290 "Believers are to think on matters that are consistent with the law of God". Page 290
- d. Fourth, "believers are to think on whatever is pure." "Hagnos (pure) describes what God in Scripture defines as holy, morally clean, and undefiled." Page 290. "Believers are to purify themselves because Jesus Christ is pure." Page 290
- e. Fifth, "believers are to think on whatever is lovely. The word Prosphiles (lovely) appears only here in the New Testament. It could be translated sweet, gracious, generous or patient." Page 290
- f. Sixth, "believers are to think on whatever is of good repute. Euphemos also appears only here in the New Testament. It describes what is highly regarded or well thought of. Believers' thoughts are elevated by Scripture to fix on the loftiest themes." Page 290

3. The third result is the guide for ideal toiling. v. 9

In verse 9, Paul moves on from how to think to now how to work and live as a servant of God. He tells the believers in Philippi that because they have learned from the instructions from him in the past when he was there in Philippi, and also from the letter he is writing to them, they should now be ready to follow his example and move on with their Christian service. He promises them that if they will follow his pattern, God will provide His special peace for them all along the way. Paul still seemed to be concerned that the church at Philippi might get discouraged and not stay faithful to the Lord Jesus. I sense some sadness in Paul's words, because he seems to be thinking if he could not be with the believers, Jesus would if they allowed Him to do so. I have tried to envision myself in Paul's position in the Roman prison with the uncertainty of his future trying to encourage these believers knowing that there was a great possibility that he would never see them again. This is truly a spiritual love letter from the spiritual father to the spiritual children which he had produced. Can you sense the love and compassion that Paul had for his children? I surely can!

III. NOTICE THE PROVISION PAUL MENTIONS. vs. 10-19

In these next several verses we are going to see the unusual contentment that Paul had in spite of his isolation, his imprisonment, and his need for so many things. Paul had accepted his situation, and was now telling the Philippian believers that he was perfectly content and that his every need would be taken care of by God the Father. Let's take a careful look at the tremendous confidence and assurance that Paul demonstrated in spite of his incarceration and loneliness. Hopefully, we will come to experience the same kind of contentment that Paul enjoyed.

A. Notice the sharing in Paul's provision. v. 10

In verse 10, Paul changes the direction of his written conversation with the Philippian believers. Instead of trying to help them get things in order, he now begins to commend them for the way they had been instrumental in providing for his needs. Later in these verses Paul tells the believers that just like they had ministered to him once before when he was in Thessalonica, they now had sent Epaphroditus to him with some basic necessities of life, plus maybe even some funds that he so desperately needed there in prison. They had shown to him just how much they cared for him. They cared enough to sacrifice generously so that their spiritual mentor would be provided for. This is truly how every church ought to take care of their founder. They should not disrespect and figuratively speaking, throw him out of their doors and minds. And yet, everywhere I have been moving for the past many years as I get older, I see more and more professing Christians who reject, neglect, and even abuse so many of their former Christian pastors and church leaders simply out of selfishness, a know-it-all attitude, and total disregard for God's Word when He says the following. In **I Timothy 5:17, "Let the elders that rule well be counted worthy of double honour, especially they who labour in the word and doctrine."**

Paul was so appreciative of the way the Philippian believers were helping to take care of him, even hundreds of miles away in a Roman prison. Paul says in this verse 10, that the people's kindness had flourished while he was in Philippi, later when he travelled on to Macedonia and Thessalonica. These dear people had been faithful to help Paul, but now, almost ten years had past since he left Philippi and the people had not had the opportunity to help again recently. So, when they got the privilege of sending him help via Epaphroditus all the way to Rome, they were very pleased and happy to have the privilege to help their founder and leader. We all need to remember that if we have really been saved, then we should love the idea of sharing with those in need, especially those of the household of faith.

B. Notice the satisfaction in Paul's provision. vs. 11-12

I love the way Paul speaks in verse 11 of our text. In this verse Paul tells the people that he is very pleased with the way they had helped in the past, but he was not begging for their help again, because he knew that God would meet his every need. In fact, Paul said to the Philippians that he had learned in whatever state he was in to be therewith content. In other words, he was not going to complain because whatever God provided for him, little or much, he would be satisfied with it. And the way Paul states this, he had learned from all of his experiences with much and with little that God would be faithful and provide for him whatever he needed. Paul was truly a satisfied man, and he let it be known that he could deal with it either way.

In verse 12 Paul continues the thought of doing with little, and yes, even learning to do with much. Truly, Paul had outgrown the most common believer, because most people complain when supplies are low and they

have a tendency to waste when things are good. They just never seem to learn the lesson that Paul had learned through all of his times of blessings, and also, during his times of poverty. Paul just knew that whether he had little or much, God would still meet every need he had. This is exactly what Paul says in the very next verse.

C. Notice the strength of Paul's provision. v. 13

Verse 13 is probably one of the most memorized or quoted verses in the entire Bible. In fact, this verse accompanies verse 19 as being two of the most encouraging verses in all of the Word of God. These verses might even be more popular than **John 3:16**. Why? Because we go through so many trials and suffer so much loss here on this earth as believers that we need some strong reminders of the sufficiency and provision of God. Both of these precious verses remind us of these. We will talk more about verse 19, but it is sufficient to say that it is truly a blessing to get this message through Paul the Apostle. Just remember folks, that our source and supply comes from the One Who owns and created everything. So, we must not worry, but pray and trust. We can face anything we have to face because Christ has promised us His strength.

D. Notice the source of Paul's provision. vs. 14-16

These three verses remind us of the loving care with which God took care of His servant through the kindness and generosity of His people in Philippi. The Bible tells us that, "**For God so loved the world that He gave.....**". (**John 3:16**) Did you get the message? The message was and is that God is a loving God of compassion, and He lives to give to others. We must therefore learn that we are never more like Jesus than we are when we give to others with the right motives. God has chosen through His supernatural sovereignty to meet the needs of His people and His ministries through His generous servants. Whether it is Paul the Apostle on his second missionary journey, or Pastor Stan Frye, working in Africa, God supplies the needs through those Christians who have grown up enough to invest in the work of God. Therefore, as Paul said, these people in Philippi had done extremely well in helping to take care of his needs while on his journey from Philippi all the way ultimately to Rome. Thus, we have no valid reason to worry today, do we? I sincerely don't think we do!

Verse 15 is just another verse that magnifies Paul's love and appreciation for the Philippians because no others took care of him when he needed them so much! Can you just imagine folks how Paul loved these people because when he had been neglected by others as he left the city of Philippi to go on to Thessalonica, these dear believers gave him some money to help him on his missionary journey. These people were serious about their faith, and they not only talked the talk, but they walked the walk as well. These dear Philippians had the spirit of sacrificial giving because they loved Christ and His servant, Paul, as well. Oh dear friends, it would be so wonderful if we had this kind of spiritual giving in the churches of today. We do occasionally find

one from time to time, but most churches today don't have funds to give because they are staff heavy or they are so much in financial debt that they just don't have the funds to be generous with visiting preachers or missionaries. Truthfully, many of these churches just make excuses about why they can't give from the time the visiting preachers or missionaries come until the time they leave. And, this would be a good time for me to tell you that any church which doesn't support heartily its pastors, visiting preachers, and yes missionaries, has signed its death warrant. Why? Because God doesn't pour out His blessings upon churches and ministries if they are very selfish and intentionally withhold giving to God's servants. The churches of today had better wake up because we are now losing 3,000-4,000 Evangelical Churches every year here in America because the hand of God has been taken from their ministries.

Verse 16 is just an affirmation of the kindness of the Philippian believers because when Paul moved on to Thessalonica, the Philippian church was the only one that sent him funds and gifts. So, Paul was so grateful for the way the believers in Philippi showered him with love and affection.

E. Notice the stimulus of Paul's provision. v. 17

Why did the Apostle Paul appreciate so much the way the Philippian believers helped take care of him? Because he needed everything they gave! I don't think so. I believe that the primary reason Paul wanted the believers to give, not only to him, but also to others was because he knew that whatever they did to help him with his ministry would be rewarded with the blessings of God which would come their way. In other words as I often say when writing letters to thank our givers to Gateway International Missions, these contributors will definitely share in the rewards for their involvement in winning people to Christ. So, what Paul was saying was if they shared in ministry by giving to help him, they would be blessed with rewards which would go on their account. Please pay close attention to what Jesus told His disciples as he sent them out the first time to preach the Gospel. **Matthew 10:40-42, "He that receiveth you receiveth me, and he that receiveth me receiveth him that sent me. He that receiveth a prophet in the name of a prophet shall receive a prophet's reward; and he that receiveth a righteous man in the name of a righteous man shall receive a righteous man's reward. And whosoever shall give to drink unto one of these little ones a cup of cold water only in the name of a disciple, verily I say unto you, he shall in no wise lose his reward."** Folks, have you gotten the picture? The picture is that we are in a team sport of sharing the Gospel, and everyone on our team, whatever his or her position might be, is going to share in the rewards that every disciple, preacher, and church leader might receive. So, don't you think it is about time for us to take it seriously when God allows us to be on His team.

Paul understood that he could help the Philippian believers share in his reward for the work he did for Christ if he received the gifts they gave unto him. Therefore, the primary reason he accepted their gifts was so that they

could reap rewards from his work. Have you ever heard someone say, "please take the gift I am trying to give you, because if you don't, I will miss out on the blessing because God told me to give it to you?" This surely is what Paul is talking about in this passage.

F. Notice the sacrifice of Paul's provision. v. 18

In verse 18, Paul makes a great statement to compliment the Philippian Christians who had sent money and gifts to him in Rome through Epaphroditus. He tells them that by their generosity and the faithfulness of Epaphroditus to bring the offering to him, he had every need completely met, and that truthfully, he was very overwhelmed with their support of him. He compared their gifts to the Old Testament sacrifices where the sacrifices were made with the fragrance of smoking incense or other perfumes which would leave a sweet smell in the Tabernacle where the offerings were made. Paul was just enthusiastically saying, the giving by the saints in Philippi left a sweet smell and aroma all around because of the costly price that they had demonstrated by their unselfish sacrifice to meet the needs of Paul. Paul said this type of giving not only pleased him, but it was also well-pleasing to God as well. In other words, God accepted what the people had done for the preacher, and He put His approval and favor upon it. This act reminds me of what Paul said in **Romans 12:1-2**.

G. Notice the supply of Paul's provision. v. 19

Well beloved readers, we have finally reached that wonderful verse that we referred to earlier. This verse says, **"But my God shall supply all your need according to His riches in glory by Christ Jesus."** As Paul pondered the greatness of what the Philippians had done for him by giving to his needs so generously, it must have dawned upon Paul that there was just no way that he could ever repay these generous believers. So suddenly, I just think that he realized that he didn't have to repay them or even try to reciprocate what they had done. Why? Because it is God Who owns everything in the world, and His supply never runs short or out! Paul just emphatically reminded the Philippian Christians that they would not ever have to worry, because God's supply house never gets empty, and He will always be there to meet every need of His people through Christ Jesus, our Lord! Therefore, they needed not to worry, even if they gave Paul everything they had. Why? Because they were standing under the spout where the goodness of God and the glory run out! Paul may not have been able to reward them, but God Almighty could and would. This is His promise and He has never broken one yet. So folks, let's just step up by faith and stand under this spout and watch every need be met for us physically, mentally, emotionally, and of course, spiritually! There is not shortage when it comes to God's supply! This would be a good place to shout once more! Hallelujah!

IV. NOTICE THE POSTLUDE PAUL MENTIONS. vs. 20-23

We now come to the closing verses of chapter four of the Book of Philippians! Because this is the close of this wonderful book, I have called it the postlude of the book. This means the closing song, the final curtain, the last act, or maybe the final word. And of course, this is what Paul is doing as he speaks to these precious believers in Philippi. As far as we know, this was truly the last time that Paul had the privilege to communicate with these precious saints in Philippi before he would die just about two years later. So, we might say that this is the doxology of the program giving glory to God and appreciation to the people.

A. Notice the gratitude in this postlude. v. 20

In verse 20, Paul cries out to God with praise for God's goodness and glory. He wants to express his gratitude to God for the way He had blessed Paul down through the years of ministry, including what He had done for Paul as he had established the church at Philippi, and even now, what God had done for the Apostle through the support of the Philippian believers while he was hidden away in a Roman prison. Paul surely love the Philippian church members, but he loved God far more because He had saved Paul on the Damascus Road, and then He had called Paul and equipped him for his many years of service. Paul's last statement in this verse was Amen! In other words, so be everything that Paul had said about God the Father and the believers in Philippi!

B. Notice the greetings in the postlude. vs. 21-22

In the days of the New Testament writers, most people didn't start their letters with personal greetings at the beginning of their epistles like we do in our modern world. Instead, they waited until the end of the documents and then offered words of greetings from their family members, their friends, or even other colleagues. In verses 21-22, Paul salutes all the saints in Christ Jesus in Philippi. Paul wanted to make sure that he greeted all of those who were genuinely saved, but he did not send greetings to the dogs, the circumcision, or the enemies of the cross. He just sent greetings to those who were authentically saved. Maybe we should spend more time greeting those who are really saved and genuinely live like it, rather than trying to be spiritually diplomatic with those who are phonies and hypocrites.

Not only does Paul greet the truly saved people in Philippi, but he then offers personal greetings from those who were abiding with him in the Roman prison. You might remember that earlier in this book, I mentioned that some people believe that Paul may have been under house arrest during this imprisonment, but more likely, the Roman rulers probably let some of his friends visit him on a regular basis while he was confined.

We are certainly not sure who was with Paul at this time, but Dr. John MacArthur indicates in his Commentary on Philippians that maybe these

dear brethren with Paul may have included Timothy, Epaphroditus, Tychicus, Philemon, Aristarchus, Onesimus, and maybe even Mark and Luke. There seems to be some indications in the Book of Acts that these brethren were with him in Rome. Page 317. You would need to go to Acts and read about these colleagues who may have been with him. Therefore, Paul wanted to send greetings from all of these special brethren to the people in Philippi. Then, in verse 22, Paul gives a respectful general greeting to all the saints that were with him in Rome. These were probably many people that Paul had led to Christ since coming to Rome during the two years that he had been there. Of course, there may have been others as well who wanted to send their regards to the Philippian Christians. But, there is one thing that is evident in this verse. A lot of those who wanted to send greetings were Romans who had come to Christ through the preaching of Paul, maybe even some prison guards who were chained to Paul. Paul states that these saints were from Caesar's household; meaning of course that they were Roman citizens. No wonder why Paul had always wanted to go to Rome, with this kind of positive response from hardened Romans, God had really planned this harvest of souls through this unique preacher of the Gospel. We should forever be grateful for the way God supernaturally used Paul to proclaim the Gospel message, even within terrible circumstances.

C. Notice the grace in the postlude. v. 23

We might say that this last verse in the Book of Philippians closes this book the same way Paul had begun it; with the grace of God. What better way to say goodbye than to offer God's amazing grace to those whom Paul had loved so much. Everything about Paul was based upon the grace of God, so he always started with God's grace, and he wanted to end with the grace of God. It was Paul's deepest prayer that God might continue to shower His grace upon the Philippian believers, and that they continue to live with the blessings of the grace of God. And then, Paul says Amen one more time! Paul was saying, may the grace of God be with you, in you, upon you, and I wholeheartedly agree that this is the way it should be. Praise God for this faithful servant of God who has made such world of difference to Christendom and the Kingdom of God. May God give us some more Paul the Apostles in this generation! Amen!

Conclusion

Well beloved friends, believe it or not, we have come to the end of this new book on Philippians. I don't have any idea just how many hours I have spent sitting at my computer working on this material, but I do know that it has been hundreds and hundreds of hours. Yet, I don't begrudge one hour of this time because I have been blessed unbelievably throughout this study. I have been blessed, inspired, convicted, rebuked, instructed, and shaken by the truth of this little book hidden away in just a few short pages of the New Testament. This has truly been a great blessing to me, but it has also been a challenge. The reason it has been such a challenge is that I not only wanted to interpret every verse in the book correctly, I also wanted to make the truth of every verse practically applicable to our every day Christian lives. It is my prayer that God might use this work to help bless and change the lives of many genuinely hungry people who want to learn practical truth to help them grow in the Lord.

I have been taught down through my years that the purpose of the conclusion is to provide a summary or re-statement of what a document has said. In the introduction we should tell what we are going to tell. Then, in the body of the document or book, we should tell what we want to tell. And then, in the conclusion we should tell again what we have already told. So, without going into a lot of detail, let me tell you that this book has been about Paul's wonderful letter to the Philippian Christians written from a Roman prison while he was there waiting to see what God would allow to happen in the future. I believe Paul's imprisonment when he wrote this book was his first imprisonment around 64 A.D. I believe also he was released from this imprisonment and then approximately two years later he was arrested and imprisoned again, and then was beheaded by Nero sometime near A.D. 67-68.

The content of this book has to do with Paul writing a letter to the Philippian believers who were having problems of division and disunity in their church. Because of this, the people were very discouraged and really down. So, Paul writes this epistle from a difficult situation in a Roman prison to tell the believers that if he could go through what he had to endure and still rejoice, then they should be able to rejoice as well. Therefore, the over-riding theme of this book is "Rejoicing while going through whatever trial God allows to come your way." I believe the Philippians found this joy because of Paul's instructions and recommendations, and I believe the people became more endeared and loved by Paul more than ever before. I also know that Paul helped the church at Philippi to solve a lot of their division problems, and he left them with a lot of encouragement and hope. Truly, his epistle to this church showed them how to not only rejoice during bad times, but also how to rejoice when they were suffering without basic needs and unpredictable futures. And, I will say that the book provides some wonderful practical advice about how we too can rejoice when things go wrong and also when things go right.

So beloved Christian family, it is my prayer that you may study this book anew and dig deeply into its content, and I pray that you will do a little mining in this commentary as well. If God uses one thing in any person's life to help them grow in Christ, get a new burden for the proclamation of the Gospel, and help them to love Jesus more, all of this long hard effort will have been worthwhile. Therefore, thank you for studying this material along with your wonderful Word of God. Please know that my wife and I love Jesus, we love the mission fields of the world, and we love you the readers very much as well. Now, let's go rejoice in the Lord!

In the King's service,

Dr. Stan A. Frye, President of Gateway International Bible College and GIMI



