

OVERVIEW OF BOOK OF PHILIPPIANS -- TO KNOW CHRIST AND TO MAKE HIM KNOWN – THE DIVINE STRATEGY FOR FURTHERING THE GOSPEL

INTRODUCTION:

Usually when one thinks of Paul's epistle to the Philippians one might focus on the **theme of joy**. That would not be surprising since the words *Joy* or *Rejoice* occur 16 times in these four chapters. But that does not capture the true **essence of the book**. This is not a Five Step manual on how to experience true Joy in Christ. There are a number of themes that are woven like threads in the tapestry of this extremely personal and actually very normal letter. Paul is not combating major problems here like in **1 Corinthians** – although he does deal with dissension in the church between some key women and the errors of some false teachers. Paul is not writing a formal doctrinal treatise as he does in **Romans** – although the section in Chap. 2 on Christology – Jesus Christ emptying Himself – called the Kenosis – is certainly exceptional. Paul is not writing a more general type of epistle designed for circulation among the churches as we saw in **Ephesians**. Here in Philippians, Paul has a genuine love and concern specifically for the church members in Philippi and that love and concern is mutual.

Some of the major themes include:

- An emphasis on fellowship in the gospel – or perhaps we should more accurately call it ministry partnership since Paul is very mission focused – not talking about just sharing a meal together and enjoying each other's company – he is concerned for the furthering of the gospel of Jesus Christ
- The importance of godly examples
- An exhortation to pursue humility as the key to church unity
- A passion to know Jesus Christ experientially in a more intimate way and then to make Christ known to others
- An understanding of Christology – particularly the doctrine known as Kenosis
- The importance of contentment and trusting God to provide for all your needs
- A plea for a right perspective towards persecution and suffering for the cause of Christ

So this book is not as easy to outline or as tightly constructed from an analytical standpoint.

J. Sidlow Baxter: This short epistle is simply and naturally a letter, not a formal treatise. **Bishop Lightfoot** calls it “the least dogmatic of the apostle's letters.” It is practical rather than theological; corrective rather than formative; a letter of Christian appreciation and exhortation. Of course, the whole of it is interpenetrated with Christian doctrine, but any theological teaching occurs only incidentally, and always to press home practical Christian godliness. The faults which it corrects were, fortunately, only incipient rather than developed – strife, vainglory, wrong self-esteem, disunity, murmurings, disputings – all of which are very human besetments. Paul knows how hard the lessons are; the Philippians need more than precept; they need a high, constraining example – and so there threads its way into the letter that “unique and splendid theological paragraph” beginning: “*Let this mind be in you, which was also in Christ Jesus*” (2:5-11).

We must understand the background of the church at Philippi and the occasion for Paul taking the time in prison in Rome to pen this letter and send it back to them with their faithful servant Epaphroditus.

Founding of the Church at Philippi: Acts 16 – the middle of Paul’s second missionary journey

- **Composition of the church planting team** – we see Timothy added to the traveling church planting partnership of Paul and Silas – (16:1-5) – this was no one-man lone-ranger type of operation
- **Call to break new ground in Macedonia** -- (16:9-10) – the Holy Spirit was very specifically directing Paul – he received a vision
a certain man of Macedonia was standing and appealing to him, and saying, "Come over to Macedonia and help us." 10 And when he had seen the vision, immediately we sought to go into Macedonia, concluding that God had called us to preach the gospel to them.
- **Characteristics of the city of Philippi** – (16:12)
a leading city of the district of Macedonia, a Roman colony; and we were staying in this city for some days

- o Significance of it being a **Roman colony** (Bill McRae)

Philippi elevated to this position in 27 BC

Many advantages of being a Roman citizen:

- had property rights guaranteed;
- right of fair trials guaranteed – they could appeal to Caesar;
- right to vote;
- couldn’t be beaten

These details are going to be important in the case of Paul

Application:

- **Perspective of the people:** our citizenship is Rome though we live in Macedonia -- so act like Roman citizens – 1:27-- background – conduct yourself in a manner worthy of gospel of Christ; we have a higher calling;

3:20 – *our citizenship is in heaven* (not Rome) – we have a higher citizenship; belong to a different kingdom –

This affects:

- Values
- Priorities
- Conduct
- Expectations

Christians live on earth but represent heaven.

The believer should evaluate every decision in light of eternal realities. Philippians is filled with anticipation of Christ’s return.

- **Position of the Emperor** -- one of the most momentous occasions was when the Roman emperor would visit the colony – great festivities – Roman emperor called soter = Savior; we eagerly wait for a soter = the Lord Jesus Christ
 - Significance of it being a **military garrison** – Roman soldiers there (**Bill McRae**) look at map of Asia over into Greece; right on the Northern boundaries of Roman Empire; very strategic center; soldiers garrisoned there; protecting from potential invasion from barbarians to north;
 - **4:4ff** – the peace of God shall **guard** ...your hearts (emotionally) and your minds (intellectually)
 - Became a designated place for retirement of Roman soldiers – many allusions to military life – **1:28** – not be vulnerable to a surprise attack – “**alarmed**” – **1:27** – standing firm, **striving together** – a military term – advanced shoulder to shoulder; **3:21** – **even to subject all things to himself** = what the Roman army was trying to do;
 - **2:5** – **a thing to be grasped** – that was what the Roman emperor was trying to do = grasp equality with God – worship of Roman emperor had already begun in that city;
 - **3:14** – **I press on toward the mark** – figure of Roman chariot race (cf. Ben Hur) – holding the reins tightly and leaning forward – illustrated Christian truth by means of these military allusions which they would have easily understood
- **Converts at Philippi**
 - Lydia – God opening up hearts to the gospel message
Not enough Jews in the city to house a synagogue
Prominence of women in the church
Paul was the spiritual father of these early converts in the church
 - Philippian Jailor and his household – Supernatural deliverance – *What must I do to be saved?* Paul created quite a memorable scene
- **Controversy at Philippi**
Upset the lucrative fortune-telling business in the city; falsely accused; beaten; thrown into prison – charged the officials with having abused their rights as Roman citizens
Attitude of Paul there in prison: had been imprisoned unjustly but you don’t see any whining or complaining or even frustration or despair -- he and Silas were singing hymns to the Lord at midnight

Occasion for the Writing:

- 1) Letter of **thanksgiving and appreciation** for their financial support (**4:10-18**)
- 2) Letter of **assurance and encouragement** regarding his situation as well as that of their beloved servant Epaphroditus – shows the mutual care and concern that existed – he knew that his imprisonment had discouraged many of the believers – wanted to assure them that God was working out His divine strategy for the furtherance of the gospel;

prison was part of that plan; this was key since they were facing persecution as well; also they had heard that Epaphroditus had been very sick

- 3) Letter of **commendation** – 2 individuals:
 - Timothy – prepares them for his arrival; 2:19-20 – remarkable; he is young and timid but you revere him highly; to what degree is your life geared to seek the interests of Christ? What has concerned you all this week?
 - Epaphroditus – helping to care for Paul – providing food and meeting his needs in prison; he had become very ill; church was concerned – he wanted to let them know that he was fine; Paul decides to send him back home – he could have been accused of not completing his mission – his service had not been unsatisfactory
- 4) Letter of correction and instruction – wanted them to pursue unity in humility – especially in light of some of the personal disagreements that were causing problems in the church; also wanted to warn them against both legalism and antinomianism

Returning to those major themes we mentioned earlier, here is my suggestion for the Big Idea of the book:

Big Idea: TRUE JOY COMES FROM MINISTRY PARTNERSHIP AND HUMBLE UNITY IN FURTHERING THE GOSPEL AS WE PURSUE CHRIST

(1:1-2) OPENING TO THE EPISTLE

A. (:1) THE PARTNERS IN FELLOWSHIP IN THE GOSPEL

“Paul and Timothy, bond-servants of Christ Jesus, to all the saints in Christ Jesus who are in Philippi, including the overseers and deacons”

leadership structure in NT churches

B. (:2) THE PLEASANTRIES OF TYPICAL GREETINGS

“Grace to you and peace from God our Father and the Lord Jesus Christ.”

I. (Chap. 1) SUFFERING TOGETHER –

TRUE MINISTRY PARTNERSHIP PROMOTES THE FURTHERANCE OF THE GOSPEL (DESPITE PERSECUTION) AS WE FOCUS ON EXALTING CHRIST

A. (1:3-11) (AS WE LABOR TOGETHER UNTIL CHRIST RETURNS), MINISTRY PARTNERSHIP SPARKS THREE RESPONSES:

1:5 *“in view of your participation in the gospel”*

- JOYFUL THANKSGIVING
- INTIMATE BONDS
- PURPOSEFUL PRAYER FOR SPIRITUAL MATURITY

B. (1:12-18) THE ADVANCEMENT OF THE GOSPEL CAN ACTUALLY BENEFIT FROM DIFFICULT PERSONAL CIRCUMSTANCES:

1:12 *“Now I want you to know, brethren, that my circumstances have turned out for the greater progress of the gospel,”*

- BY SHOWING UNBELIEVERS THE REALITY OF OUR RELATIONSHIP TO CHRIST;

- **BY SHOWING BELIEVERS OUR EXAMPLE OF JOY AND FAITHFULNESS (WHICH GIVES THEM COURAGE TO PROCLAIM THE GOSPEL)**

C. (1:19-26) FOCUS ON EXALTING CHRIST AND YOU CAN COUNT ON SUPERNATURAL BOLDNESS IN FRUITFUL MINISTRY –

1:21 *“For to me, to live is Christ, and to die is gain.”*

- **ONE THAT WILL GLORIFY CHRIST**
- **ONE THAT WILL EFFECTIVELY IMPACT OTHERS**

D. (1:27-30) THE GOSPEL OF CHRIST SHOULD INSPIRE SPIRITUAL UNITY AND SUPERNATURAL COURAGE AS WE STRIVE TOGETHER TO FURTHER THE GOSPEL (WHILE ACCEPTING THE INEVITABILITY OF PERSECUTION)

1:27 *“striving together for the faith of the gospel”*

Summary: Paul is illustrating how the divine strategy is to use suffering and even persecution to promote the furtherance of the gospel.

- Points to his own example – don’t be distressed by my circumstances – imprisoned for the cause of Christ
- Points to the suffering of the Philippian church – your response should be to actually rejoice as you understand persecution to be part of God’s overall plan

II. (Chap. 2) SERVING TOGETHER – TRUE UNITY PROMOTES THE FURTHERANCE OF THE GOSPEL (DESPITE PERSECUTION) AS WE SUBMIT TO HUMBLING OURSELVES

A. (2:1-4) THE CHURCH COMMUNITY MUST PURSUE UNITY AND HUMILITY TO ENJOY MINISTRY PARTNERSHIP

“If therefore there is any encouragement in Christ, if there is any consolation of love, if there is any fellowship of the Spirit, if any affection and compassion, ² make my joy complete by being of the same mind, maintaining the same love, united in spirit, intent on one purpose. ³ Do nothing from selfishness or empty conceit, but with humility of mind let each of you regard one another as more important than himself; ⁴ do not merely look out for your own personal interests, but also for the interests of others.”

In order to effectively serve together and promote the gospel there must be unity of spirit that can only come via humility. The Philippian church had a problem with selfishness.

Karen always used these verses with our kids.

B. (2:5-11) THE PATTERN FOR BOTH HUMBLING OURSELVES AND BEING EXALTED BY GOD IS JESUS CHRIST

“Have this attitude in yourselves which was also in Christ Jesus, ⁶ who, although He existed in the form of God, did not regard equality with God a thing to be grasped, ⁷ but emptied Himself, taking the form of a bond-servant, and being made in the likeness of men. ⁸ And being found in appearance as a man, He humbled Himself by becoming obedient to the point of death, even death on a cross. Therefore also God highly exalted Him, and bestowed on Him the name which is above every name, ¹⁰ that at the name of

Jesus every knee should bow, of those who are in heaven, and on earth, and under the earth, ¹¹ and that every tongue should confess that Jesus Christ is Lord, to the glory of God the Father.”

C. (2:12-18) JOYFULLY PROGRESS IN HUMBLE SERVICE TO MAINTAIN A BLAMELESS TESTIMONY

2:15 *“that you may prove yourselves to be blameless and innocent, children of God above reproach in the midst of a crooked and perverse generation, among whom you appear as lights in the world,”*

Remember Pastor Harmon preaching just last Fall from this passage on reasons we should not complain but instead rejoice

D. (2:19-30) TWO SERVANTHOOD EXAMPLES OF MINISTRY PARTNERSHIP

1. **(2:19-24)** Example of Timothy = A Kindred Spirit

2:20 *“For I have no one else of kindred spirit who will genuinely be concerned for your welfare.”*

2. **(2:25-30)** Example of Epaphroditus = A Courageous and Compassionate Minister

2:25 *“But I thought it necessary to send to you Epaphroditus, my brother and fellow worker and fellow soldier, who is also your messenger and minister to my need;”*

III. (Chap. 3) STRIVING TOGETHER – FOLLOW PAUL’S EXAMPLE OF PRESSING FORWARD TOWARDS THE GOAL OF CONFORMITY TO JESUS CHRIST

A. (3:1-11) WARNING AGAINST LEGALISM

3:9 *“and may be found in Him, not having a righteousness of my own derived from the Law, but that which is through faith in Christ, the righteousness which comes from God on the basis of faith,”*

B. (3:12-16) GOAL OF PURSUING CHRIST

3:12 *“in order that I may lay hold of that for which also I was laid hold of by Christ Jesus”*

3:14 *“the prize of the upward call of God in Christ Jesus”*

C. (3:17-21) WARNING AGAINST LAWLESSNESS (LICENSE)

3:19 *“whose end is destruction, whose god is their appetite, and whose glory is in their shame, who set their minds on earthly things.”*

We need to live as **citizens of heaven – our lifestyle should reflect our citizenship**

3:20 *“For our citizenship is in heaven, from which also we eagerly wait for a Savior, the Lord Jesus Christ;”*

IV. (Chap. 4) STANDING FIRM TOGETHER – IN CONTENTMENT AND DEPENDENCE ON THE GOD OF PEACE FOR HIS PROVISION OF ALL NEEDS

4:1 *“Therefore, my beloved brethren whom I long to see, my joy and crown, so stand firm in the Lord, my beloved.”*

Paul recognized that there were many threats that would undermine the stability of the church:

- Persecution and suffering
- Internal dissension and complaining
- Selfish behavior
- Christian leaders operating from impure motives
- Influence of the evil and wicked culture around us
- False teaching – legalism or lawlessness

A. (4:1-9) FOUR PRESCRIPTIONS FOR PEACE as we stand firm in the faith

4:7 *“And the peace of God, which surpasses all comprehension, shall guard your hearts and your minds in Christ Jesus.”*

1. **(4:1-3)** Peace in our Personal Relationships in the Church
2. **(4:4-5)** Peace in all of Our Relationships
3. **(4:6-7)** Peace in Our Hearts
4. **(4:8-9)** All Peace Ultimately Derives from the God of Peace

B. (4:10-20) GOD CAN BE TRUSTED TO PROVIDE ALL MATERIAL NEEDS FOR THOSE WHO PARTNER IN THE MINISTRY OF THE GOSPEL

4:13 *“I can do all things through Him who strengthens me”*

4:19 *“And my God shall supply all your needs according to His riches in glory in Christ Jesus.”*

(4:21-23) CLOSING TO THE EPISTLE: GREETING AND BLESSING

“Greet every saint in Christ Jesus. The brethren who are with me greet you. 22 All the saints greet you, especially those of Caesar's household. 23 The grace of the Lord Jesus Christ be with your spirit.”

DEEPER DIVE INTO SEVEN OF THE MAJOR THEMES

This will be a topical study tracing each thread throughout the four chapters

1) GOSPEL PARTNERSHIP

Philippians repeatedly emphasizes believers working together for gospel advancement.

Paul thanks the Philippians for their:

- Financial support
- Prayer support
- Missionary partnership in evangelism and church planting
- Faithfulness and Encouragement

Philippians **1:5** speaks of: *“your participation in the gospel.”*

The church at Philippi had partnered with Paul from the beginning.

Gordon Zerbe: The *koinōnia* word group in Paul is best translated with the language of **partnership**. The word does not designate fellowship in a narrowly religious sense, especially as interpersonal “sharing” over tea. Rather, the key notion is “**participating together**” in something, which is the original meaning of fellowship, “the state of being fellows.” It connotes having a share in something, holding in common, and more specifically, partnering with someone in something.

Paul uses the word “*together*” so often in the book; must stand shoulder to shoulder in the gospel ministry

Concept of Yokefellow: When Paul calls upon his “*true companion*” (**4:3: true yokefellow; *gnēsie syzyge***) to help the women who are quarreling to be reconciled, he is drawing on a common phrase used for **famous pairs of friends** in Greco-Roman literature. The metaphor of the “yoke of friendship” was used by Plutarch and by Euripides to depict the relationship between pairs of friends. Paul’s yokefellow and co-workers are those who contended with him in the cause of the gospel (**4:3**).

Application: Every believer should ask, “How am I actively participating in the spread of the gospel?”

The Gospel Coalition: Today Philippians would be called a missionary support letter. Paul is writing to people who help provide the prayer support and financial assistance necessary for his ministry as an apostle to the Gentiles. To fulfill his end of the partnership, Paul assures the Philippians of his prayers, updates them on his personal circumstances, reports on the effectiveness of gospel ministry in his area, offers spiritual encouragement, and expresses heartfelt gratitude for the many ways they support his ministry.

2) IMPORTANCE OF GODLY EXAMPLES

We can’t just learn by spoken words; we need to learn also by seeing examples – models of the right behavior – we all need godly examples

Follow my example – Multiple times Paul urged them to **follow his example**

2:18 “*And you too, I urge you, rejoice in the same way and share your joy with me.*”

3:15-17 “*Let us therefore, as many as are perfect, have this attitude; and if in anything you have a different attitude, God will reveal that also to you; ¹⁶ however, let us keep living by that same standard to which we have attained. ¹⁷ Brethren, join in following my example, and observe those who walk according to the pattern you have in us.*”

4:9 “*The things you have learned and received and heard and seen in me, practice these things; and the God of peace shall be with you.*”

Remember he also provided the model behavior of Timothy and Epaphroditus

Of course our ultimate model is the Lord Jesus Christ Himself as we saw in Chap. 2

But what about us – what examples has God provided for us and how have we benefited?
What is the importance of our example to others?

3:20 – we have the same citizenship; expectation, hope as the apostle Paul – present yourself as a visible model for others to follow – people will follow your example

Certainly this is true in the home – but also in the church
Cf. college fellowship group

3) HUMILITY IS THE KEY TO UNITY IN THE CHURCH

Not considered a virtue in the ancient world but a sign of weakness.

What is humility?

An elusive character trait – once you recognize it in your life you instantly become proud and it evaporates;

A well-balanced evaluation of one's own importance –

Rom. 12:3 – **not to think more highly of oneself than one ought to think;**

Def: The product of having a right view of one's importance in light of both the holiness of God and the sinfulness of man .

It is an attempt to balance one's dignity as a child of God but grasp as well the dilemma of human depravity; we are unworthy of God's love but we are not worthless; hold in tension these two truths of dignity and depravity of man; humility and dependence are inexplicably linked together;

Is. 66:2 "For My hand made all these things, Thus all these things came into being," declares the LORD. "But to this one I will look, To him who is humble and contrite of spirit, and who trembles at My word."

Pride produces attitude of independence; we naturally resist humility; we want to be number 1 and put our will and desires above everyone else

Cf. John the Baptist: "*He must become greater; I must become less*"

Our flesh demands to be put first always

The key to humility is not to try to attain it but to focus on the **grace of God** – all things were given to you so you have nothing to prove, nothing to boast in, nobody to impress.

God resists the proud but gives grace to the humble.

Become less concerned about self and more **others-centered**.

It is all about making others great; about promoting others rather than ourselves; about looking out for the interests of others rather than ourselves.

The Enemy of Humility to Avoid = **Self-Centered Mindset (2:3)**

1. Selfish Ambition

"Do nothing from selfishness"

2. Vanity, Empty Conceit

"or empty conceit"

a worthless or empty desire for glory—a mindset that cares only to enhance an inflated view of self. Such vanity is self-promoting and ends up with a meaningless self-glorification that ends up helping no one and accomplishing nothing beyond satisfying the ego.

4) KENOSIS PASSAGE – CHRISTOLOGY OF THE BOOK

The doctrine of the **kenosis** (from the Greek *kenōō*, “to empty”) comes from **Philippians 2:5–8**, where Paul writes:

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

This passage is one of the most profound statements about the **incarnation** of Christ, and it has been the subject of much theological reflection.

The key question is: **What does it mean that Christ “emptied Himself”?**

1. What the Kenosis Does Not Mean

The kenosis **does not mean** that Jesus ceased to be God or gave up any of His divine attributes. Such an idea—called *kenoticism* or *kenotic Christology*—is heretical because it undermines both the deity of Christ and the reality of salvation.

If Christ divested Himself of divine attributes, He would be “less than fully God,” and therefore unworthy of worship and unable to represent God’s interests in salvation.

The Bible is clear that Jesus remained fully divine even in His humanity:

“Jesus Christ is the same yesterday and today and forever.” — **Hebrews 13:8, BSB**

The author of Hebrews calls the Son:

"the radiance of His glory and the exact representation of His nature" (**Heb. 1:3**).

Therefore, the kenosis **cannot** mean:

- That Jesus stopped being God.
- That He lost omniscience, omnipotence, or omnipresence in essence. If God can cease possessing divine attributes, He ceases to be God.
- That His divine nature was mixed or changed into human nature.

The Council of Chalcedon (A.D. 451) summarized this truth by affirming that Christ is **one person in two natures—divine and human—“without confusion, without change, without division, and without separation.”**

2. What the Kenosis Does Mean

The grammar of Philippians 2 is crucial.

Notice:

"emptied Himself, taking the form of a servant"

The text does not say:

"He emptied Himself of something."

Rather, it explains the emptying by two participles:

- taking the form of a servant
- being made in human likeness

The emptying occurred **by addition**, not subtraction.

According to Scripture and orthodox Christian theology, the kenosis refers to **Christ's voluntary self-limitation and humility in becoming human**, not a loss of His divine nature or attributes. Jesus' "emptying" was not a subtraction of deity but an **addition of humanity**—He "laid aside His heavenly privileges" and "veiled His glory" while remaining fully God

What privileges did He temporarily lay aside?

- The manifestation of His heavenly glory
- The independent exercise of His divine authority – chose to submit to His Heavenly Father
- The enjoyment of the riches of heaven – **2 Cor. 8:9**

Christ's self-emptying means He **submitted Himself to the Father's will through the power of the Holy Spirit**, not that He ceased to be God

Thus, the kenosis is best understood as:

- **A voluntary renunciation of divine privilege**, not divine essence.
- **A taking on of human nature**, not a giving up of divine nature.
- **A submission to the Father's will**, not a reduction of divine power.

Jesus Himself affirmed this relationship of submission:

"Truly, truly, I say to you, the Son can do nothing of Himself, unless it is something He sees the Father doing; for whatever the Father does, these things the Son also does in like manner." **John 5:19**

Even while veiling His glory, Christ remained fully divine:

"For in Him all the fullness of Deity dwells bodily." Col. 2:9

And His divine power was evident throughout His ministry—He calmed storms (**Mark 4:39**), forgave sins (**Mark 2:5–7**), and raised the dead (**John 11:43–44**).

Summary: The kenosis reveals the **depth of Christ's humility and love**. Though He was "*in the form of God*," He chose to become a servant and die for sinners. This is the model of humility Paul calls believers to imitate.

5) THE MIND OF CHRIST – PROPER THINKING

A recurring theme throughout Philippians is the importance of **proper thinking**.

Notice the repeated references to:

- Mind
- Think
- Attitude
- Consider

The Christian life is transformed by adopting Christ's perspective.

1:9 Paul wants the believers to grow in knowledge and discernment

1:27 *“with one mind striving together for the faith of the gospel”*

2:2 *“be of the same mind”* = mind of Christ = attitude of *humility of mind* – vs 3

2:5 *“have this attitude in yourselves which was also in Christ Jesus”*

3:19 set your minds on things concerning your citizenship in heaven, *not on earthly things*

4:8 *“Finally, brethren, whatever is true, whatever is honorable, whatever is right, whatever is pure, whatever is lovely, whatever is of good repute, if there is any excellence and if anything worthy of praise, let your mind dwell on these things.”*

Application

Victory in the Christian life begins in the mind.

Believers become what they continually think about

Importance of Pursuing Christ --

Spiritual maturity is not perfection but continual **pursuit of Christ**.

6) CONTENTMENT – TRUSTING THE LORD TO MEET ALL YOUR NEEDS

Pastor Harmon preached on Contentment last October from **Phil. 4:12-19**

4 Indicators that you are learning Contentment:

- 1) You will be focused on Providence rather than Problems (vs. 12)
- 2) You will find Sufficiency in Christ instead of Circumstances (v. 11)
- 3) You will rely on Divine Power instead of your Own (v. 13)
- 4) You will be Preoccupied with the Well Being of Others instead of Yourself (v. 14)

We think when we get this or when we get that, then we will be Happy; that is self-deception; most of us don't know precisely what we want but we are certain we don't have it; driven by pursuing the treasure at the end of a rainbow rather than drinking from the well of the present moment; If we are not satisfied with what we have right now we will never be satisfied by what we want to obtain in the future

Enemy of Contentment = Comparison: looking around to see how we measure up against others; leads to **Covetousness**; the Lord alone knows what is best for us; He uses our present circumstances for our eternal good; put our hope in His character

Must live in light of Eternity – not focusing on this life alone

Paul's joy was not based on:

- Comfort
- Health
- Freedom
- Wealth
- Success

It was based on Christ.

Confidence in Christ Meeting our Needs – Phil. 4:19 –

Puritan classic: should be included in series “Echoes from the Puritan Pulpit”:

The Rare Jewel of Christian Contentment – **Jeremiah Burroughs**

Provides this definition: “Christian Contentment is that sweet, inward, quiet, gracious frame of spirit, which FREELY submits to and delights in God’s wise and fatherly disposal in every condition.”

What does it mean to seek contentment in God alone -- “Since God is contented with Himself alone, if you have Him, you may be contented with Him alone, and it may be, that is the reason why your outward comforts are taken from you, that God may be all in all to you. It may be that while you had these things, they shared with God in your affection, a great part of the stream of your affection ran that way: God would have the full stream run to Him now.”

Sinclair Ferguson commenting on the title: “contentment is a jewel — and so we should value it highly; but it is rare and so we need to seek it.”

7) JOY / REJOICING

Joy in Jesus Christ regardless of our circumstances

This is not mere happiness – that is dependent on our outward circumstances –

Joy is the fruit produced by the Holy Spirit because we are abiding in Jesus Christ and have our vision focused on Him

Chap. 1 – Joy in the context of Suffering Together – even in prison; even while being persecuted

That the truth of Jesus Christ and the gospel message are being proclaimed regardless of the motivation of the preachers

1:18-19 *“in every way, whether in pretense or in truth, Christ is proclaimed; and in this I rejoice, yes, and I will rejoice. ¹⁹ For I know that this shall turn out for my deliverance through your prayers and the provision of the Spirit of Jesus Christ,”*

Paul’s concern was for the spiritual maturity of the Philippians – for their “*joy in the faith*”

Chap. 2 – Joy in the context of Serving Together in Humility and Unity --

Paul’s desire: “*make my joy complete*” (vs. 2) – by pursuing unity in humility with the mind of Christ

His desire was that there would be **mutual joy** shared between himself and his beloved Philippian believers as together they persevere in proclaiming the word of life

2:17-18 *“But even if I am being poured out as a drink offering upon the sacrifice and service of your faith, I rejoice and share my joy with you all. ¹⁸ And you too, I urge you, rejoice in the same way and share your joy with me.”*

2:28-29 – returning Epaphroditus to them so that they could rejoice in being reunited and seeing that he has recovered from his illness and has faithfully fulfilled his mission of helping Paul

Chap. 3 – Joy in the Context of Striving Together –

Guarding against false teachers

3:1 *“Finally, my brethren, rejoice in the Lord. To write the same things again is no trouble to me, and it is a safeguard for you.”*

Sounds almost like a summary statement as if he is closing the epistle

Chap. 4 – Joy in the Context of Standing Firm Together --

4:1 *“Therefore, my beloved brethren whom I long to see, my joy and crown, so stand firm in the Lord, my beloved.”*

Paul describes these believers as his “*joy and crown*”

Summary Command: **4:4** *“Rejoice in the Lord and again I say rejoice”*

Repeated for emphasis

4:10 *“But I rejoiced in the Lord greatly, that now at last you have revived your concern for me; indeed, you were concerned before, but you lacked opportunity.”*

Paul appreciated their financial support in the ministry – practical expression of partnership in the gospel ministry

Big Idea: TRUE JOY COMES FROM MINISTRY PARTNERSHIP AND HUMBLE UNITY IN FURTHERING THE GOSPEL AS WE PURSUE CHRIST

John MacArthur: What robs believers of biblical joy?

1. First, and by far the most important, is false salvation.
2. A second factor that hinders joy is the influence of Satan and his demons.
3. A third factor that robs believers of joy is an inadequate understanding of God’s sovereignty.
4. A fourth negative element that steals joy is prayerlessness.
5. A fifth cause of joylessness is the emotional low that frequently follows a spiritual high.
6. A sixth way believers lose their joy is by focusing on circumstances.
7. A seventh negative element that robs believers of joy is ingratitude.
8. An eighth cause of lack of joy is forgetfulness.

9. A ninth factor in loss of joy is living by uncontrolled feelings, living by the flesh instead of by the Spirit.
10. A tenth and final reason for lack of joy is unwillingness to accept forgiveness.

WHY STUDY THIS BOOK?

- To encourage partnership in the gospel so that we share in tangible ways with those who are on the front lines of missionary work.
- To increase our level of joy in striving together for the faith of the gospel
- To develop greater confidence in how God uses even difficult circumstances to further His kingdom agenda
- To root out and guard against the types of sins that would attack the unity we should experience in the body of Christ
- To adopt the mind of Christ with respect to serving God with all humility
- To grow in our true knowledge of Jesus Christ – both sharing in His sufferings and anticipating future glory
- To foster dependence upon God for meeting the material needs of those that are ministering the gospel