

TO KNOW CHRIST AND TO MAKE HIM KNOWN

A Devotional Commentary on the Book of Philippians

by Paul G. Apple, April 2001
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TRUE JOY COMES FROM FELLOWSHIP AND UNITY IN FURTHERING THE GOSPEL (IN DEPENDENCE UPON GOD) AS WE SEEK TO FULLY KNOW CHRIST

For each section:

- Thesis statement ... to focus on the big idea
- Analytical outline ... to guide the understanding
- Devotional questions ... to encourage life application
- Representative quotations ... to stimulate deeper insight

Philippians 1:27 *"striving together for the faith of the gospel"*

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Paul Apple, 304 N. Beechwood Ave., Baltimore MD 21228.

www.bibleoutlines.com

paulgapple@gmail.com

OUTLINE OF PHILIPPIANS

OUR GOAL: TO KNOW CHRIST AND TO MAKE HIM KNOW

TRUE JOY COMES FROM FELLOWSHIP AND UNITY IN FURTHERING THE GOSPEL (IN DEPENDENCE UPON GOD) AS WE SEEK TO FULLY KNOW CHRIST

I. (1:1-26) TRUE FELLOWSHIP PROMOTES THE FURTHERANCE OF THE GOSPEL (DESPITE PERSECUTION) AS WE FOCUS ON EXALTING CHRIST

"in view of your participation in the gospel"

(1:1-11) AS WE LABOR TOGETHER UNTIL CHRIST RETURNS, FELLOWSHIP IN THE GOSPEL SPARKS THREE RESPONSES:

JOYFUL THANKSGIVING

INTIMATE BONDS

PURPOSEFUL PRAYER (FOR SPIRITUAL MATURITY)

(:1-2) INTRODUCTION -- THE SUBJECTS OF FELLOWSHIP IN THE GOSPEL

- A. *"Paul and Timothy, bondservants of Christ Jesus"*
- B. *"to all the saints in Christ Jesus who are in Philippi"*

(:3-6) FELLOWSHIP IN THE GOSPEL SPARKS JOYFUL THANKSGIVING

- A. The Recipient of Our Thanksgiving is the God who Cares for us so Personally
- B. The Occasion for Thanksgiving Should be Our Memories of fellowship with the saints *"my whole remembrance of you"*
- C. The Natural Twin of Thanksgiving is Consistent Petition
- D. The Reason for Our Thanksgiving and Petition is Fellowship in the Gospel
- E. The Confidence for Our Thanksgiving and Petition is the Perseverance of God

(:7-8) JOYFUL THANKSGIVING IS APPROPRIATE BECAUSE FELLOWSHIP IN THE GOSPEL SPARKS INTIMATE BONDS :

(:7) CLOSE UNITY

(:8) DEEP AFFECTION

- A. Such Joyful Thanksgiving is Appropriate
- B. Close Unity is Rooted in Partnership in the Grace of God that extends to both imprisonment and the defense and confirmation of the gospel
- C. The Depth of Affection Can Be Attested by God

(:9-11) FELLOWSHIP IN THE GOSPEL SPARKS PURPOSEFUL PRAYER FOR ABUNDANT LOVE EXERCISED IN WISDOM (SPIRITUAL MATURITY)

- A. Request -- abundant love exercised in wisdom
- B. Reason -- make wise choices; don't let the good be the enemy of the best
- C. Result -- be sincere and blameless, manifesting the fruit of righteousness; this achieves the ultimate result of bringing God glory and praise

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

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)

I. (:12) STATEMENT OF HIS THESIS: THE ADVANCEMENT OF THE GOSPEL CAN ACTUALLY BENEFIT FROM DIFFICULT PERSONAL CIRCUMSTANCES

- A. The Apostle Paul's Personal Circumstances Looked Bleak
- B. These Difficult Circumstances Have Promoted the Advancement of the Gospel

II. (:13-18) TWOFOLD EXPLANATION -- TWO POSITIVE RESULTS FROM HIS DIFFICULT CIRCUMSTANCES

A. Showing Unbelievers the Reality of His Relationship to Christ

1. His bonds were an instrument of freedom and opportunity and rejoicing rather than enslavement and limitation and bitterness
2. His bonds were plainly seen by all to be in fellowship with Christ and in His service rather than on account of any wrongdoing
3. The scope of his testimony was unlimited
 - a. the strategic palace guard (praetorian guards)
 - b. all other unbelievers as well throughout Rome and the empire

B. Showing Believers His Example of Joy and Faithfulness Which Gave Them Courage to Proclaim the Gospel

1. The gospel advances more effectively through the testimony of many than just through the testimony of one superstar
2. There is a natural fear of witnessing that needs to be overcome in order for us to advance the gospel
3. The right response to difficult circumstances can mobilize the ministry of others by encouraging them to step out in faith
4. People might proclaim the gospel from either good or bad motivations
 - a. out of a sense of competition and personal ambition
 - b. out of a genuine love and sense of good will
5. We should rejoice in the proclamation of the gospel irregardless of the motives of the proclaimers or their good or bad intentions towards us personally

(1:19-26) FOCUS ON EXALTING CHRIST AND YOU CAN COUNT ON SUPERNATURAL BOLDNESS IN FRUITFUL MINISTRY -- ONE THAT WILL GLORIFY CHRIST AND EFFECTIVELY IMPACT OTHERS

I. SUPERNATURAL BOLDNESS IN FRUITFUL MINISTRY COMES FROM FOCUSING ON EXALTING CHRIST (:19-21)

- A. The Power of Intercessory Prayer and the Help of the Holy Spirit Give Confidence that We Will Persevere in the Faith (:19)
- B. Supernatural Boldness is the Key to a Ministry that Glorifies Christ (:20b)
- C. Focusing on Exalting Christ is the Key to Being Able to Count on Such Supernatural Boldness in Ministry (:20a,21)

II. THE PURPOSE OF THIS LIFE IS FRUITFUL MINISTRY -- ONE THAT GLORIFIES CHRIST AND BENEFITS OTHERS (:22-26)

- A. The Opportunity for Continued Fruitful Ministry Counterbalances Our Desire to Escape the Difficulties of This Life and Enter Glory (:22-24)
- B. Fruitful Ministry Involves Fellowship in the Gospel that Furthers the Gospel (effectively impacts others) and Focuses on Exalting Christ (:25-26)

II. (1:27-2:30) TRUE UNITY PROMOTES THE FURTHERANCE OF THE GOSPEL (DESPITE PERSECUTION) AS WE SUBMIT TO HUMBLING OURSELVES

"striving together for the faith of the gospel"

(1:27-2:2) THE GOSPEL OF CHRIST SHOULD INSPIRE LOYAL SOLIDARITY (TRUE UNITY) AND SUPERNATURAL CALM AS WE STRIVE TOGETHER TO FURTHER THE GOSPEL (WHILE ACCEPTING THE INEVITABILITY OF PERSECUTION)

I. (1:27a) THE GOSPEL OF CHRIST SHOULD BE THE INSPIRATION FOR OUR LIFESTYLE

- A. General Exhortation (1:27a) *"Only conduct yourselves in a manner worthy of the Gospel of Christ"*
- B. Specific Reasons (2:1) -- the fruit of the gospel in our life should inspire us to live worthy of such a high, privileged calling
 - 1. Encouragement from being united with Christ

2. Comfort, Consolation stemming from love
3. Fellowship generated and maintained by the Spirit
4. Compassions and Mercies (affection and sympathy)

II. (1:27b; 2:2) LOYAL SOLIDARITY IN STRIVING TOGETHER TO FURTHER THE GOSPEL

A. Motivation -- not only because this lifestyle is consistent with the gospel, but such loyal solidarity is expected and meets with the approval of spiritual leaders

B. Method

"standing firm in one spirit with one mind"

"being of the same mind"

"maintaining the same love"

"united in spirit"

C. Mission

"striving together for the faith of the Gospel"

"intent on one purpose" = the furthering of the Gospel and the magnifying of Christ

III. (1:28-30) SUPERNATURAL CALM IN ACCEPTING THE INEVITABILITY OF PERSECUTION

A. Significance of Supernatural Calm

1. What it signifies about the ultimate destiny of your opponents
2. What it signifies about your ultimate destiny

B. Inevitability of Conflict --

the Source of the Conflict is the same as the Source of Salvation

C. Privilege of Fellowship With Christ in Suffering

"for Christ's sake"

(2:3-4) THE SECRET TO HUMBLING OURSELVES LIES IN MAKING OTHERS GREAT -- BOTH IN OUR PERSPECTIVE AND IN OUR PURSUITS

I. THE TWO ENEMIES OF HUMILITY

A. Selfish Ambition -- *"Do nothing from selfishness"*

B. Vanity, Empty Conceit -- *"or empty conceit"*

II. MAKE OTHERS GREAT IN OUR PERSPECTIVE BY VALUING THEM MORE HIGHLY THAN OURSELVES

"but with humility of mind let each of you regard one another as more important than himself"

III. MAKE OTHERS GREAT IN OUR PURSUITS BY MAKING THE PROSPERITY OF OTHERS A HIGHER PRIORITY THAN OUR OWN PROSPERITY

"do not merely look out for your own personal interests, but also for the interests of others."

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

I. THE PATTERN FOR HUMBLING OURSELVES IS JESUS CHRIST (:5-8)

A. Humbling in Mind -- Christ's Mindset Chose Service to Others Over Personal Rights (:5-7)

1. We must keep on thinking like Christ

"Have this attitude in yourselves which was also in Christ Jesus."

2. We cannot hold on to our personal rights

"who, although He existed in the form of God, did not regard equality with God a thing to be grasped"

3. We must empty ourselves in order to serve others (seek their prosperity and welfare above his own personal interests)

"but emptied Himself, taking the form of a bond-servant, and being made in the likeness of men."

B. Humbling in Action -- Christ's Obedience Was Absolute and Humiliating (:8)

1. The mindset must be accompanied by the action
 - a. the mindset -- *"having been found in likeness as a man"*
 - b. the action -- *"He humbled Himself"*
2. Christ's obedience was Absolute -- *"unto death"*
3. Christ's obedience was Humiliating -- *"even the death of the cross"*

II. THE PATTERN FOR BEING EXALTED BY GOD IS JESUS CHRIST (:9-11)

- A. God has Exalted Christ to the Position of Absolute Supremacy (:9)
"Therefore also God highly exalted Him, and bestowed on Him the name which is above every name"
- B. The Lordship of Jesus Christ Will Ultimately Be Recognized by Universal Submission to the Glory of God (:10-11)
 1. Bowing Down in Worship
"that at the name of Jesus every knee should bow, of those who are in heaven, and on earth, and under the earth"
 2. Confession of Lordship
"and that every tongue should confess that Jesus Christ is Lord, to the glory of God the Father"

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

I. (:12-13) GOD MAKES IT POSSIBLE FOR US TO PERSEVERE IN HUMBLE SERVICE

- A. We Must Work Hard at Persevering in Humble Service (:12)
 1. The Example of Christ should be Sufficient Motivation
 2. Our Attitude must be that of a Humble Servant -- striving to please his master
 3. The Responsibility for Persevering in Humble Service Rests on Each of Us -- *"keep working out the salvation of yourselves"*

B. God Works Efficaciously to Make It Possible For Us to Persevere in Humble Service (:13)

1. Graciously grants the DESIRE to live a life of humble service in harmony with God's good pleasure
2. Graciously grants the POWER to carry out that desire

II. (:14-16) MAINTAIN A BLAMELESS TESTIMONY AS A CHILD OF GOD

Paul uses 6 different approaches to urge the Philippians to maintain a blameless testimony in harmony with their privileged calling and new nature as children of God

A. Warning -- Do Not Spoil Your Humble Service (:14)

1. By Grumblings
2. By Arguments

B. Description -- of the Type of Children that Make a Father Proud -- The Character of a Blameless Testimony

1. Blameless -- nothing people can censure you for
2. Pure; innocent -- unmixed; unadulterated --
3. Children of God -- ones who faithfully reflect the image and nature of their Father
4. Without blemish; no flaws

C. Reminder -- of the Evil Environment and Perverse Peer Pressure that Wage War Against a Blameless Testimony

D. Picture -- Be a Shining Star for Christ in the midst of such darkness; Be a lighthouse in your community with worldwide impact thru participation in the body of Christ

E. Focus -- The Source and Power of a Blameless Testimony

Source -- we need the content

Power -- we need the content in its efficacy

F. Personal Plea -- The Importance of Our Blameless Testimony to Our Spiritual Leaders -- Paul's own stake in this matter

III. (:17-18) FELLOWSHIP IN JOY MUST ALWAYS DOMINATE OUR FELLOWSHIP IN SACRIFICIAL SERVICE AND SUFFERING

A. Fellowship in Sacrificial Service and Suffering Is Viewed as An Offering to God

B. Fellowship in Joy Must Be the Dominating Tone

(2:19-30) TWO EXAMPLES OF PARTNERSHIP IN THE GOSPEL: UNSELFISH, SACRIFICIAL SERVICE TO OTHERS IN ORDER TO FURTHER THE GOSPEL

I. (:19-24) THE EXAMPLE OF TIMOTHY -- A KINDRED SPIRIT

A. (:19-21) The Heart of an Undershepherd of Christ

1. A Blessing to both Paul and the Philippians
 - a. faithful in his interaction
 - b. encouraging in his outlook
 - c. accurate in his assessment
2. A Kindred Spirit to both Paul and Christ
 - a. unique in this regard
 - b. genuinely concerned for other
 - c. totally unselfish
 - d. totally committed to Christ Jesus

B. (:22) The Track Record of Faithful Service

1. Man of Proven Worth
2. True Partner in the Gospel
3. Like a Faithful Son

C. (:23-24) The Availability to Meet Needs

1. Willing to Serve wherever needed
2. Patterned after the Model of the Apostle Paul Himself

II. (:25-30) THE EXAMPLE OF EPAPHRODITUS -- A COURAGEOUS AND COMPASSIONATE MINISTER

- A. (:25) A Minister of Great Value (based on his companionship/partnership)
 - 1. To the Apostle Paul Himself
 - a. *"my brother"*
 - b. *"fellow worker"*
 - c. *"fellow soldier"*
 - 2. To the Philippian Believers
 - a. *"your messenger"*
 - b. *"minister to my my need"*
- B. (:26-27) A Minister of Great Compassion and Mutual Love (based on his companionship/partnership)
 - 1. (:26) With respect to the Philippians
 - 2. (:27) With respect to the Apostle Paul
- C. (:28-29a) A Minister of Great Joy (based on his companionship/partnership)
- D. (:29b-30) A Minister of Great Courage and Dedication

III. (3:1-21) OUR PERSONAL PURSUIT OF CONFORMITY TO CHRIST MUST TAKE PRIORITY OVER EVERYTHING -- EVEN OUR EFFORTS AT FURTHERING THE GOSPEL

"that I may know Him, and the power of His resurrection and the fellowship of his sufferings"

(3:1-7) REJOICING IN CHRIST MEANS TURNING OUR BACK ON EVERYTHING THAT WOULD EXALT OUR FLESH

I. (:1) REMEMBER THE COMMAND

- A. Point of Emphasis -- *"Finally, my brethren"*
- B. Point of the Command -- *"rejoice in the Lord"*
- C. Point to Remember -- We need to be reminded
"To write the same things again is no trouble to me, and it is a safeguard for you."

II. (:2) WATCH OUT FOR FLESH PROMOTERS = JOY STEALERS (CHARLATANS)

probably 3 designations of the same troublesome group (Judaizers), rather than 3 different groups; (points from Gromacki)

- A. Their Character -- *"dogs"*
- B. Their Conduct -- *"evil workers"*

C. Their Creed -- *"false circumcision"*

III. (:3) REMEMBER WHO YOU ARE = CHRIST EXALTERS

A. *"the true circumcision"*

B. *"who worship in the Spirit of God"*

C. *"and glory in Christ Jesus"*

D. *"and put no confidence in the flesh"*

IV. (:4-6) EXPOSE THE FUTILITY OF CONFIDENCE IN THE FLESH

Paul is the best person to expose the futility of confidence in the flesh:

"although I myself might have confidence even in the flesh.

If anyone else has a mind to put confidence in the flesh, I far more."

A. Futility of Trusting in Religious Rites

"circumcised the eighth day"

B. Futility of Trusting in Religious Pedigree

"of the nation of Israel"

"of the tribe of Benjamin"

"a Hebrew of the Hebrews"

C. Futility of Trusting in Religious Knowledge (Orthodoxy)

"as to the Law, a Pharisee"

D. Futility of Trusting in Religious Zeal (Commitment)

"as to zeal, a persecutor of the church"

E. Summary / Final Verdict: Supreme Example of Legalistic Self-Righteousness

"as to the righteousness which is in the Law, found blameless"

V. (:7) FOCUS ON THE BOTTOM LINE = KNOWING CHRIST

This is an accounting perspective -- concerned with profits vs. losses

"But whatever things were gain to me, those things I have counted as loss for the sake of Christ."

(3:8-11) KNOWING CHRIST IN A TRANSFORMING WAY IS THE ONLY PURSUIT WORTHY OF ETERNITY

I. (:8-9) KNOWING CHRIST AS THE SOURCE OF RIGHTEOUSNESS TRANSFORMS US TO LIVE A LIFE OF FAITH

A. Lofty Goal -- Worthy of Eternity

1. Summary: *"the surpassing value of knowing Christ Jesus my Lord"*
2. Two Parts:
 - a. *"that I might gain Christ"*
 - b. *"and may be found in Him"*
3. Ultimate Goal: Approved by God as one who has the Righteousness of Christ
 - a. Negatively -- *"not having a righteousness of my own derived from the Law"*
 - b. Positively -- *"but that which is through faith in Christ, the righteousness which comes from God on the basis of faith"*

B. Heavy Cost

"I count all things to be loss"
"for whom I have suffered the loss of all things"
"and count them but rubbish"

II. (:10-11) KNOWING CHRIST AS THE SOURCE OF RESURRECTION POWER TRANSFORMS US TO LIVE A LIFE OF FELLOWSHIP WITH HIS SUFFERINGS AND HIS GLORY

A. Lofty Goal -- Worthy of Eternity

1. Summary: *"that I may know Him"*
2. Two Key Areas:
 - a. *"the power of His resurrection"*
 - b. *"the fellowship of His sufferings"*
3. Ultimate Goal
"in order that I may attain to the resurrection from the dead"

B. Heavy Cost -- *"being conformed to His death"*

(3:12-14) PRESSING TOWARD THE GOAL IS THE ONLY WAY TO RUN THE RACE OF CONFORMITY TO JESUS CHRIST

I. THE GOAL IS CONFORMITY TO JESUS CHRIST

"in order that I may lay hold of that for which also I was laid hold of by Christ Jesus"
"the prize of the upward call of God in Christ Jesus"

THE MOTIVATION OF A LOFTY GOAL:

- A. Salvation is Just a Starting Point
- B. Christ Jesus Sets the Standard
- C. The Prize is Worthy of the Effort

II. IF YOU THINK YOU HAVE ALREADY "ARRIVED" YOU ARE OFF TARGET

"Not that I have already obtained it"

"or have already become perfect"

"Brethren, I do not regard myself as having laid hold of it yet"

THE DELUSION OF PERFECTION:

- A. Some People Feel They Have Reached the Spiritual Mountaintop
- B. Some People Feel They have Arrived
- C. The Reality is That We All Have a Long Way to Go

III. LOOKING AT THE PAST WILL SLOW YOU DOWN

"forgetting what lies behind"

THE PITFALLS OF THE PAST:

- A. Weighed down by Sins/Failures of the Past (Heb. 12:1-2) / OR
Complacent because of Past Spiritual Success
- B. Tainted by Bitterness and a Lack of Forgiveness / OR
Over confident because of the evidence of the Fruit of the Spirit
- C. Resigned to Powerlessness / OR
Distracted from continuing to Rely on the Lord

IV. PRESSING TOWARD THE GOAL IS THE ONLY WAY TO RUN THE RACE

"I press on"

"but one thing I do... reaching forward to what lies ahead"

"I press on toward the goal"

THE CHALLENGE OF PERSEVERING IN MAKING PROGRESS:

- A. Requires a Perspective of Hope
- B. Requires a Work Ethic of Diligence
- C. Requires a Large Dose of Perseverance

(3:15-21) FOLLOWING THE RIGHT EXAMPLES (THE WAY OF THE CROSS RATHER THAN THE WAY OF INDULGENCE) WILL KEEP US ON TRACK IN THE RACE TO GLORY TO JOIN OUR SAVIOR, THE LORD JESUS CHRIST

I. (:15-16) BUILD ON THE PAST WHILE PRESSING ONWARD

- A. Be Like-Minded in Your Perspective of Pressing Onward
- B. Be Careful to Continue to Build on the Foundation of Past Maturity.

II. (:17-19) IMITATE ONLY THE RIGHT EXAMPLES

- A. Right Example = Sacrificial Pattern of Life Demonstrated by the Apostle Paul (and His faithful co-workers)
- B. Wrong Example = Indulgent Pattern of Life Demonstrated by the "*enemies of the cross of Christ*"
 - 1. Their Description
 - 2. Their Destiny
 - 3. Their Dependency
 - 4. Their Dishonor
 - 5. Their Delight

III. (:20-21) FOCUS ON FUTURE GLORY

- A. Future Glory Seen in Our Heavenly Citizenship
- B. Future Glory Seen in Our Coming Savior
- C. Future Glory Seen in Our Resurrection Body

IV. (4:1-23) FELLOWSHIP AND UNITY IN FURTHERING THE GOSPEL REQUIRES DEPENDENCE ON GOD FOR PEACE OF HEART AND PROVISION OF NEEDS

"I can do all things through Him who strengthens me"

(4:1-9) HARMONY OF FELLOWSHIP AND INNER PEACE REQUIRE TOTAL COMMITMENT – 4 PRESCRIPTIONS FOR PEACE

I. (:1-3) HOW TO EXPERIENCE PEACE IN OUR PERSONAL RELATIONSHIPS IN THE CHURCH

REQUIRES OUR TOTAL COMMITMENT TO STICK TOGETHER IN THE LORD AS WE STRIVE TOGETHER FOR THE FAITH OF THE GOSPEL (cf. 1:27)

Significance of phrase “*in the Lord*”

- A. Encouragement to Stand Firm in the Lord
 - 1. Based on our Common Pursuit --
pressing forward together to know Christ
“*Therefore*” -- looking back at chap. 3
 - 2. Based on our Preciousness (to the Apostle Paul and hopefully to one another)
“*beloved brethren*”
“*whom I long to see*”
“*my joy and crown*” -- cf. 1 Thess. 2:19
the award an athlete would receive for winning a race
- B. Exhortation to Live in Harmony in the Lord
- C. Plea for Assistance from Fellow Partners in the Gospel
True Comrade / Clement / other Fellow Workers
- D. Final Encouragement
 - 1. Based on our history of partnership in the gospel
 - 2. Based on our common and guaranteed final destination

II. (:4-5) HOW TO EXPERIENCE PEACE IN ALL OUR RELATIONSHIPS

- A. (:4) Prerequisite -- Requires Our Total Commitment to Always Rejoice in the Lord
- B. (:5a) Graciousness – Requires Our Total Commitment to Put up With a Lot
“*Let your forbearing spirit be known to all men*”
- C. (:5b) Accountability – Requires Our Consciousness of the Nearness of the Lord
“*The Lord is near*”

III. (:6-7) HOW TO EXPERIENCE PEACE IN OUR HEART

- A. (:6a) Formula for Certain Defeat = Giving in to Anxiety
- B. (:6b) Formula for Certain Victory = Life of Inner Peace

1. Transfer of Responsibility = Cast all your cares upon God
 2. Tools of Appropriation
 - a. *"by prayer"*
 - b. *"and supplication"*
 3. Tone of Approach = *"with thanksgiving"*
- C. (:7) Assurance of Victory When We Depend on the Amazing Resources of God
1. Key Resource Here = *"the peace of God"*
 2. Supernatural Quality and Quantity of God's Amazing Resources
 3. Assurance of Protection – *"shall guard your hearts and your minds"*

IV. (:8-9) ALL PEACE ULTIMATELY DERIVES FROM THE GOD OF PEACE
"the God of Peace shall be with you"

2 KEYS TO TAPPING INTO GOD'S GRACE AND FAVOR

A. (:8) Thinking Right

1. Appropriate Food for Thought
 - a. *"whatever is true"*
 - b. *"whatever is honorable"*
 - c. *"whatever is right"*
 - d. *"whatever is pure"*
 - e. *"whatever is lovely"*
 - f. *"whatever is of good repute"*
2. Highest Possible Standard
 - a. *"if there is any excellence"*
 - b. *"and if anything worthy of praise"*
3. Active Focus -- *"let your mind dwell on these things"*

B. (:9) Acting Right

1. Actions Worth Imitating
"The things you have learned and received and heard and seen in me"
2. Practice Makes Perfect

(:10-23) GOD CAN BE TRUSTED TO PROVIDE ALL MATERIAL NEEDS FOR THOSE WHO PARTNER IN THE MINISTRY OF THE GOSPEL

I. (:10-16) CONTENTMENT AND COMMENDATION EXPRESSED TO SUPPORTERS

A. Contentment -- The Lesson of Contentment Must be Learned by Christian Workers and Communicated to Supporters

1. (:11) Summary: Contentment vs. Complaining Despite the Circumstances
*"Not that I speak from want; for I have learned to be content in whatever circumstances I am."
"in any and every circumstance I have learned the secret"*
2. (:12a) Contentment in Hard Times
*"I know how to get along with humble means"
"I have learned the secret of going hungry"
"and of suffering need"*
3. (:12b) Contentment in Prosperous Times
*"and I also know how to live in prosperity"
"I have learned the secret of being filled"
"both of having abundance"*
4. (:13) Secret of Contentment
"I can do all things through Him who strengthens me"

B. Commendation -- Repeated Commendation Should be the Response to Repeated Generous Gifts

1. (:10) Commendation for Concern Shown As Opportunity Allows
"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."
2. (:14) The Principle of Contentment Does Not Nullify the Need for Support
"Nevertheless, you have done well to share with me in my affliction."
3. (:15-16) Commendation for Repeated Faithfulness in Supporting Paul
"And you yourselves also know, Philippians, that at the first preaching of the gospel, after I departed from Macedonia, no church shared with me in the matter of giving and receiving but you alone; for even in Thessalonica you sent a gift more than once for my needs."

II. (:17-20) PROFIT AND PROVISION

A. Profit -- Who Ultimately Profits More from the Gift?

1. (:17) The Giver
"Not that I seek the gift itself, but I seek for the profit which increases to your account."

2. (:18a) But the Recipient Profits as Well
"But I have received everything in full, and have an abundance; I am amply supplied, having received from Epaphroditus what you have sent"
3. (:18b) More Importantly, God is Well Pleased
"a fragrant aroma, an acceptable sacrifice, well-pleasing to God."

B. Provision -- Who Ultimately Must Trust God for the Provision of Material Needs?

1. (:19) Both the Giver
"And my God shall supply all your needs according to His riches in glory in Christ Jesus."
2. (:13) And the Recipient
Repeat: *"I can do all things through Him who strengthens me."*
3. (:20) Doxology
"Now to our God and Father be the glory forever and ever. Amen."

(:21-23) CLOSING GREETINGS AND BENEDICTION

- A. (:21-22) Mutual Greetings
 1. (:21a) Giving the Greeting
"Greet every saint in Christ Jesus"
 2. (:21b-22) Receiving the Greeting
*"The brethren who are with me greet you.
All the saints greet you, especially those of Caesar's household."*
- B. (:23) Benediction
"The grace of the Lord Jesus Christ be with your spirit."

BACKGROUND OF THE BOOK OF PHILIPPIANS

Malick: His Big Idea for the book -- "AS ONE WHO IS HIMSELF SUFFERING FOR THE GOSPEL PAUL HONORS THE PHILIPPIANS FOR THEIR PARTICIPATION WITH HIM IN HIS SUFFERINGS, AND URGES THEM TO HUMBLE THEMSELVES FOR THE SAKE OF ONE ANOTHER AGAINST THE DIVISIVE THREATS OF INNER DISPUTES AND EXTERNAL FALSE TEACHERS SO THAT THEY MIGHT CONTINUE IN THEIR GOSPEL MINISTRY AND ONE DAY BE EXALTED BY THE LORD

Jeffries:

A. Historical Background

1. Philippi

a. 386 B.C.: founded by Phillip II, father of Alexander the Great

(1) Located at a strategic military and commercial crossroads, in present-day northern Greece.

(2) Once the site of rich gold and silver mines, but they were largely exhausted by 400 B.C.

(3) Both an overland and marine trade city, Philippi was located literally where "east" (Asia) met "west" (Europe).

b. 187 B.C.: becomes a Roman colony

(1) Roman colonies were not "outposts in the wilderness," as that term is understood by most of us. They were usually located in commercially strategic areas, started with about 300 veteran military families. According to William Barclay:

"...these colonies were little fragments of Rome and their pride in their Roman citizenship was their dominating characteristic. The Roman language was spoken; Roman dress was worn; Roman customs were observed; their magistrates had Roman titles, and carried out the same ceremonies as were carried out in Rome itself. They were stubbornly and unalterably Roman and would never have dreamt of becoming assimilated to the people amidst whom they were set."

(2) See ACTS 16:12

c. 31 B.C.: In one of the most decisive battles in the history of the Roman Empire, Octavian (who ultimately became Caesar Augustus) defeated the

armies of Marc Anthony and Cleopatra at Actium, near Philippi.

- (1) Philippi shortly thereafter attains status of "ius Italicum." A designation which identified it as a key Roman outpost.

"This is defined as the privilege 'by which the whole legal position of the colonists in respect to ownership, transfer of land, payment of taxes, local administration, and law, became the same as if they were on Italian soil; as, in fact, by a legal fiction, they were.'"

(Ralph Martin: Philippians, quoting K. Lake and H.J. Cadbury: The Beginnings of Christianity)

- (2) This combination of historical factors – A Greco-Roman culture dominated by fierce loyalty to Rome and a place where a Roman citizen enjoyed all the privileges of that status – made Philippi, in the Providence of God, a fertile seedbed for the planting of the Gospel.

2. Paul

- a. Began life as Saul, born in Tarsus, a prosperous commercial center in what is now southern Turkey, close to the Syrian border, in the first century A.D.
- b. He was named after Israel's first king, and was born into his tribe, Benjamin. We are certain that his family was of the upper class, since he was not only a citizen of Tarsus (ACTS 21:39), but also a citizen of Rome (ACTS 22:27-28), a status available only to those who owned land in Italy or a colony of Italy.
- c. Saul studied Jewish law in Jerusalem under the renowned rabbi and Pharisee Gamaliel (ACTS 22:3, GALATIANS 1:14), and he, too, became a Pharisee (PHILIPPIANS 3:5), a legendary one, in fact.

- (1) Pharisee means "separated one." They believed that God had set them apart as a sect to live literally by every detail of the Torah (the "Law," the teachings of Moses)

- (2) The Pharisees expected a Messiah, one who would deliver them from foreign occupation, re-establish the greatness of Israel as a kingdom, and rule with justice. However, they utterly rejected Jesus' Messianic claims, largely because he did not fit their "royal" Messianic paradigm and because he interpreted the Law differently.

- (3) The Pharisees took it largely upon themselves to oppose Jesus publicly, and to persecute Christians after His crucifixion. Saul helped to lead the fight against the proclaimers of Christ in Jerusalem (ACTS 7:58-8:3; GALATIANS 1:13), then obtained permission to persecute the new church in Damascus.

(4) It was on the road to Damascus, of course, that Saul was confronted by the risen Christ Himself in a literally blinding encounter (ACTS 9:1-19). Saul learned that day that he was, in fact, persecuting the very God he professed to worship.

(5) After ten years or so in the Roman province of Cilicia and Syria (GALATIANS 1:21) Paul was called to Antioch by a believer named Barnabas. After a while the church there commissioned the two men as evangelists to Cyprus and Galatia, and they succeeded in planting several churches in the region during that first missionary journey. So many Gentiles were becoming Christians that the church at Jerusalem sent for Paul and Barnabas to clarify exactly what God expected of these non-Jewish converts. Paul's view of the Gospel was largely endorsed by the council at Jerusalem, but it was as a result of this decision that he would suffer life-long opposition by those he came to call "Judaizers."

(6) In Jerusalem Paul and Barnabas had a severe falling-out over the issue of the trustworthiness of Barnabas' nephew, John Mark. He began his second missionary journey with a new partner, Silas. It was on this trip that Paul, in response to a dramatic "night vision," decided to toil in Macedonia.

3. Paul and the church at Philippi

a. ACTS 16:6-40

(1) Apparently Philippi contained too few Jewish families even to have a synagogue, for which 10 Jewish adult men were required

(2) Yet v.13 reveals the presence of a Jewish community before the coming of the Christian missionaries. A group of women met regularly outside of town, by the river, for prayer.

(3) V.13-14 record the details of the first Christian convert in Europe: a merchant woman named Lydia. In fact, here entire family entered the family of God through faith in Christ, and the church in Philippi began in their home.

(4) It didn't take Paul very long to get himself into trouble! V.16-24 record the story of how his powerful ministry touched the very pocketbooks of a group of masters who "hired out" a young girl who was possessed by a spirit through whom she could predict the future. After Paul exorcised the demon, he and Silas were placed under arrest, beaten, and thrown into prison.

(5) V.25-34 record the miraculous conversion of Paul and Silas' jailor, along with his entire family.

(6) I wonder what might be the perfect situation in which a new church could get started, nurtured and matured? We get a fascinating insight in v. 35-40 of how God, at least in the case of the brand new church at Philippi, orchestrated events to establish the atmosphere He desired for their growth and development.

(7) It is believed by many Bible scholars that Luke, who wrote the book of ACTS, stayed on at Philippi after Paul and Silas left. The chief basis for this assumption is the fact that the "we" narrative style of ACTS ends abruptly in 16:17 and does not begin again until ACTS 20:5 – again in Philippi – where Luke makes reference to Paul's arty "waiting for us" before making his final visit to Jerusalem.

b. The church of Philippi became one of Paul's most faithful and substantial supporters.

4. Some particulars about the Epistle to the Philippians

a. It is clearly a prison epistle

b. Unlike most of his epistles, Paul's authorship of the letter has gone virtually unchallenged.

c. There is some scholastic argument over whether Philippians is, in fact, a single letter or a composite of two separate ones.

d. The theme of this letter? It is known by many as "The Epistle of Joy." Is this possible? A letter full of JOY written from prison by a man facing a most uncertain future?

Kent: Re Occasion and Purpose -- "The Philippian church sent Epaphroditus to Paul with a gift from the congregation (4:18) and with instructions to minister to his needs through personal service (2:25). He also must have brought news of the progress and problems of the church. In the performance of his responsibilities, Epaphroditus became gravely ill, and the Philippians heard about it. For some reason, this latter circumstance greatly distressed Epaphroditus. Was he embarrassed because he felt he had disappointed the church? Or was he aware that his condition had been misinterpreted and criticized? Paul's request that the church receive Epaphroditus with all joy and that they hold him in high regard (2:29) implies that some misunderstanding had occurred.

But Epaphroditus recovered and was ready to return home. This furnished the occasion for writing the Epistle. Paul wanted the church at Philippi to understand clearly that Epaphroditus had been a real fellow soldier in the Lord's work (2:25), that his illness had been extremely serious (2:27-30), and that he was worthy of a hero's welcome (2:29).

The mention of the Philippians' gift (4:10-20) should not be regarded as Paul's first acknowledgment of their help. Too much time had elapsed since Epaphroditus's arrival for this to be a reasonable inference, nor would this mention have been delayed to the end

if it had been the occasion for Paul's writing the Epistle. Because of the several contacts between Philippi and Rome before this time, Paul had undoubtedly sent his initial thanks promptly. We may adequately account for the additional mention of the gift in this Epistle as the apostle's grateful recollection of a very generous contribution.

Other factors of a secondary nature may also have prompted the Epistle, such as Timothy's approaching visit (2:19), Paul's own hope of visiting the church (2:24), and the problem of the two women at Philippi (4:2).

Of all the letters Paul wrote to churches, this one to the Philippians stands out as being the most personal. No sharp rebukes of the congregation mar its joyful spirit: no disturbing problems threaten the progress of the church. The warnings are of a cautionary and preventive nature that are always in order. The frequent emphasis on Christ explains the underlying relationship of Paul to his readers. The names Jesus Christ, Christ Jesus, Lord Jesus Christ, Lord Jesus, Jesus, Christ, Lord, and Savior, occur 51 times in the 104 verses of the Epistle."

Racer: HOW TO HAVE JOY IN LIFE'S MOST DIFFICULT CIRCUMSTANCES

Theme: THE PURSUIT OF THE PERSON OF CHRIST AND HIS POWER
PRODUCES A HUMILITY AND UNITY THAT BRINGS GREAT JOY

Purpose: To praise and encourage the Philippians for their progress and example and to warn of the dangers that could erode the strength and purpose of their church

Tone: Tender, personal, optimistic, encouraging; You would love to be the church receiving this letter

Paul is concerned with the legacy of his ministry; what exactly will he leave behind? What will have been the ultimate impact of his ministry? Letter sent back with Epaphroditus; one of the servant leaders of the church (deacon or elder?); has the freedom to be sent out and to travel all the way to Rome to visit Paul personally and give him a significant financial gift; he has been delayed in his return because he became deathly ill; the Philippian believers had concern as to why he is not back yet

Communicates Hopes and Warnings that Apostle Paul has for this church at Philippi; Once we are not there to monitor how things go on ... we have some degree of uncertainty as to how it will go

Not crises ... but Paul wants them to give attention to these things before it would come to that; doesn't want his ministry there to be eroded away

Overview Outline (taken from Talk Through the Bible notes)

1:1-4	Salutation
1:5-11	Rejoicing in Harmony
1:12-26	Rejoicing in Hardship
1:27-2:18	Rejoicing in Humility
2:19-2:30	Rejoicing in Helpers

3:1-4:1	Rejoicing in Heaven
4:2-9	Rejoicing in Holiness
4:10-20	Rejoicing in Help
4:21-23	Greetings and Benediction

TEXT: PHILIPPIANS 1:1-11

TITLE: FELLOWSHIP IN THE GOSPEL

BIG IDEA:

**AS WE LABOR TOGETHER UNTIL CHRIST RETURNS,
FELLOWSHIP IN THE GOSPEL SPARKS THREE RESPONSES:
JOYFUL THANKSGIVING
INTIMATE BONDS
PURPOSEFUL PRAYER (FOR SPIRITUAL MATURITY)**

(:1-2) INTRODUCTION -- THE SUBJECTS OF FELLOWSHIP IN THE GOSPEL

- A. *"Paul and Timothy, bondservants of Christ Jesus"*
dedicated to the will of another; frees one up for fellowship;
based on true unity (both seeking the same goal) rather than
conflict over selfish desires and ambitions

Despite Paul's prominence as the apostle to the Gentiles, he
always maintained the spirit of teamwork (rather than dominating
in some type of hierarchical fashion)

Bruce: "Paul is the sole author of the letter, even if Timothy's name is conjoined with his in the prescript."

Turner: Timothy, who was not an apostle and did not have Paul's authority, was considered by Paul to be his equal when it came to servanthood."

- B. *"to all the saints in Christ Jesus who are in Philippi"*

not just some elite group of believers;
fellowship in the gospel is the calling for all of us;
we have been separated from fellowship with the world and with sin
so that we can fellowship with one another and with God (1 John 1);
the issue is not one of attained holiness, but of consecration accomplished by God

leaders ("*overseers and deacons*") are addressed as a subset of this
community of believers -- not set apart on some pedestal
even within this subset, the emphasis is on teamwork and
plurality of godly leadership -- not dominance by one superstar
(Note: no differentiation between one pastor-teacher who is in
a special category from all the other ruling elders)
maybe parts of this epistle will have special application to the
leaders?

Gromacki: "Although the three terms (bishop, elder, pastor) describe the same person, it is possible to isolate their distinctive emphases. First, the concept behind '*pastor*' is to shepherd and to feed. The main responsibility here is the supply of spiritual nourishment through biblical teaching. A pastor must be a teacher, first and foremost (Eph. 4:11; I Tim. 3:2). Pastoral care has three goals, delineated by Jesus Christ Himself; to teach the immature or new Christians (John 21:15), to teach adult believers (John 21:17), and to guide all the flock (John 21:16). Second, the essence of the '*bishop*' is to render oversight, to see that the work of the local church is done correctly by the members who have been trained by him. Third, the term '*elder*' refers to the individual's position and to his respect by others."

Turner: "It is interesting to note that there was a plurality of both bishops and deacons. This is the New Testament pattern."

"*in Christ Jesus*" -- vital relationship by life-sharing union

I. (:3-6) FELLOWSHIP IN THE GOSPEL SPARKS JOYFUL THANKSGIVING

- A. The Recipient of Our Thanksgiving is the God who Cares for us so Personally
 - God was not just an abstraction or theological proposition

- B. The Occasion for Thanksgiving Should be Our Memories of fellowship with the saints "*my whole remembrance of you*"
 - the total picture; no sour notes
 - (rather than being an occasion for bitterness or hard feelings)

Boice: "For both the root meaning of the words (used for prayer) and the example of Paul teach us that our prayers should be filled with thanksgiving. And more than this, they should be filled with thanksgiving for spiritual things."

- C. The Natural Twin of Thanksgiving is Consistent Petition
 - root word = "I need"
 - Characterized by a Joyful Spirit -- "*with joy*" - emphatic by position

MacArthur: "A good definition of joy is this: it's the flag that flies on the castle of the heart when the King is in residence. Only Christians can know true and lasting joy. "

- D. The Reason for Our Thanksgiving and Petition is Fellowship in the Gospel
 - includes sharing in the spiritual blessings of eternal life and union with Christ;

as well as sharing in the work of the ministry -- both through their own active proclamation and through supporting missionaries

Carson: "The heart of true fellowship is self-sacrificing conformity to a shared vision."

E. The Confidence for Our Thanksgiving and Petition is the Perseverance of God

He is the one who enables us to labor together until Christ returns
Gal. 3:3 uses same two words talking about sanctification (not the continuance of their monetary gifts)

II. (:7-8) JOYFUL THANKSGIVING IS APPROPRIATE BECAUSE FELLOWSHIP IN THE GOSPEL SPARKS INTIMATE BONDS

(:7) CLOSE UNITY

(:8) DEEP AFFECTION

A. Such Joyful Thanksgiving is Appropriate

B. Close Unity is Rooted in Partnership in the Grace of God that extends to both imprisonment and the defense and confirmation of the gospel

both can be technical legal terms for the courtroom; probably thinking of the recent aspects of his trial

C. The Depth of Affection Can Be Attested by God

III. (:9-11) FELLOWSHIP IN THE GOSPEL SPARKS PURPOSEFUL PRAYER FOR ABUNDANT LOVE EXERCISED IN WISDOM (SPIRITUAL MATURITY)

A. Request -- abundant love exercised in wisdom

They already were evidencing much love;
Love needs knowledge or it will be misdirected; knowledge alone puffs up and is worthless without love

B. Reason -- make wise choices; don't let the good be the enemy of the best

C. Result -- be sincere and blameless, manifesting the fruit of righteousness; this achieves the ultimate result of bringing God glory and praise

Carson: "Put the priorities of the gospel at the center of your prayer life... It takes only a moment's reflection to see that all these petitions are gospel-centered. These are gospel prayers. That is, they are prayers offered to advance the work of the gospel in the lives of the Philippian believers. And, by asking for gospel fruit in their lives, the ultimate purpose of these petitions is to bring glory to the God who redeemed them."

MacArthur: "The passions of a person's heart will come out in his prayers. If you examine what you pray for and find you are praying only for your needs, problems, questions, and struggles, that is an indication of where your heart is. If you pray infrequently, briefly, and in a shallow manner, you have a cold heart because prayer is not an inner desire. The call to the duty of prayer will not overcome a cold heart because prayer is an internal compulsion not fulfilled by conformity to an external standard. Lack of prayer doesn't mean that a person is merely disobedient; it indicates selfishness because of a cold heart...."

Paul prayed that the Philippians would pursue five essentials: love, excellence, integrity, good works, and the glory of God. They are all sequential, meaning that each essential in Paul's list produces what follows it. And even though we'll never arrive at perfect love, perfect excellence, perfect integrity, complete good works, or perfect glorification of God, those five essentials represent what every Christian is to pursue in his or her life."

Gromacki: These fruits (plural) doubtlessly include the fruit (singular) of the Spirit (Gal. 5:22-23), the fruit of soul-winning (Rom. 1:13), the fruit unto holiness (Rom. 6:22), the fruit of good works (Col. 1:10), and the fruit of thanksgiving (Heb. 13:15)."

* * * * *

DEVOTIONAL QUESTIONS:

- 1) When you think of the Christian leaders you have known personally, does the character trait of *servanthood* fit them? In what ways do the leaders of your local church model servanthood and challenge you to walk in that path?
- 2) What is the "*day of Christ Jesus*" in your thinking? What prominence does this perspective have in your thinking? How does the doctrine of the perseverance of God with the saints relate to the goal of this coming day of Christ Jesus?
- 3) How would you describe the necessary balance between *love* and *discernment* (knowledge)? In what ways are these often portrayed as mutually exclusive instead of co-dependent? How is the church harmed by emphasizing one of these to the exclusion of the other?
- 4) How do sins of selfishness (like bitterness and envy and self-consciousness) keep us from growing in our knowledge of God? What is the connection between the moral

condition of our heart and our ability to get to know God more intimately?

* * * * *

QUOTES FOR REFLECTION:

Walvoord: "The words '*grace*' and '*peace*,' wonderfully significant of the Christian's relationship to God, beautifully express the content of Christian salvation and the triumph of Paul in suffering, which is the theme of chapter 1. In grace, the unmerited favor of God toward those who have trusted in Christ is revealed, and with it the whole sustaining power of God for the Christian is embraced. The result is '*peace*,' peace with God through Jesus Christ, and the peace of God, the inner, supernatural tranquility which is produced as the fruit of the Spirit (Ro 5:1; Phil 4:7; Gal 5:22)."

Walvoord: "The depths of Paul's concern and love for the Philippians, and the high standard of conduct and experience here described, succinctly express the true goals in life for any Christian. Love with discernment and perception, distinguishing the good from the bad, sincerity of motive and purity of life, and abundance of the fruits of righteousness produced by the grace of God are the hallmarks of spiritual attainment, both for the Philippians and for us."

Bruce: "This love, he trusts, will be accompanied by true knowledge and perfect judgment. Paul was not blind to the dangers of emotion uncontrolled by intelligence. He was resolved, by his own account, to pray and sing '*with my spirit, but ... also with my mind*' (1 Cor. 14:15), and he was equally concerned that he and his converts should love in spirit and mind alike.

It is love that fosters the growth of true knowledge and discernment or spiritual perception. Knowledge, divorced from love, '*puffs a person up with pride*,' whereas '*love builds up*' (1 Cor. 8:1). But if love is indispensable, true knowledge and perfect judgment are necessary. The truth of the gospel is liable to be subverted where ignorance and faulty judgment provide a foothold for the unsound teaching against which the Philippians are put on their guard in chapter 3."

Wiersbe: "In spite of his difficult circumstances as a prisoner in Rome, Paul is rejoicing. The secret of his joy is the single mind; he lives for Christ and the Gospel. (Christ is named 18 times in chapter 1, and the Gospel 6 times.) '*For to me to live is Christ, and to die is gain*' (1:21). But what really is 'the single mind'? It is the attitude that says, 'It makes no difference what happens to me, just as long as Christ is glorified and the Gospel shared with others.' Paul rejoiced in spite of his circumstances, because his circumstances strengthened the fellowship of the Gospel (1:1-11), promoted the furtherance of the Gospel (1:12-26), and guarded the faith of the Gospel (1:27-30)...

Paul uses three thoughts in 1:1-11 that describe true Christian fellowship: I have you in my mind (vv. 3-6), I have you in my heart (vv. 7-8), I have you in my prayers (vv. 9-11)."

Boice: "God Finishes What He Starts --

Philippians 1:6 is perhaps one of the three greatest verses in the Bible that teach the doctrine of the perseverance of the saints, the doctrine that no one whom God has brought to a saving knowledge of Jesus Christ will ever be lost...

Men lack perseverance. Men start things and drop them. As men and women you and I are always beginning things that we never actually find time to finish. But God is not like that. God never starts anything that He does not finish. God perseveres. Has God begun something in your life? Have you been born again by the Spirit of God? Then you need not fear that you will ever be lost. Your confidence should not be in yourself, neither in your faith nor in your spiritual successes in earlier days, but in God. It is He who calls us as Christians, He who leads us on in the Christian life, and He who most certainly will lead us home.

cf. John 10:27,28 and Romans 8:38, 39"

Jeffries: The tone of Paul's letter to them indicates that the Philippian church was achieving a high level of Christian experience. None of the churches with which he was associated gave Paul less trouble than the church at Philippi. That church can certainly serve as a role model ..."

Piper: "Yes, Paul was filled with thanks and joy because the Philippians were partners with him in the gospel. But there was a deeper foundation for his joy than these outward-yet precious-displays of concern for the gospel and for him. This practical partnership in the gospel was the symptom of something greater--it pointed to a deeper reality, it was the result of and evidence that something mysterious and wonderful was taking place. Their partnership in verse 5 gave rise to Paul's *'I am sure that he who began a good work in you will bring it to completion at the day of Jesus Christ.'* Phil. 1:6 is one of the greatest and most often quoted promises in the Bible. And well it should be. The fact that God is at work in his people, changing the thought patterns and preference of our sinful nature, so that we love what He loves, retooling the grooves in our brain, knitting together the complex strands of our emotional wounds with infinitely greater skill than the world's foremost micro-surgeon--there's no greater promise than this. It is nothing other than the New Covenant promise of Ezekiel 36. *'I will give you a new heart and put a new spirit within you, I will remove the heart of stone from your flesh and give you a heart of flesh. And I will put my Spirit within you and cause you to walk in my statutes.'*"

MacArthur: Quote regarding the value of intercessory prayer:

“William Barclay noted that George Reindrop in his book No Common Task tells how a nurse taught one man to pray and in doing so changed his whole life. ‘A dull, disgruntled, and dispirited man became a man of joy. Much of the nurse's work was done with her hands, and she used her hand as a scheme of prayer. Each finger stood for someone. Her thumb was nearest to her, and it reminded her to pray for those who were closest and dearest to her. The second finger was used for pointing and stood for all her teachers in school and the hospital. The third finger was the tallest and it stood for the V. I. P. s, the leaders in every sphere of life. The fourth finger was the weakest, as every pianist knows, and it stood for those who were in trouble and in pain. The little finger was the smallest and the least important and to the nurse it stood for herself’ (The

Letters to the Philippians, Colossians, and Thessalonians, rev. ed. [Philadelphia: Westminster, 1975], pp. 13-14). “

TEXT: PHILIPPIANS 1:12-18

TITLE: THE ADVANCEMENT OF THE GOSPEL

BIG IDEA:

THE ADVANCEMENT OF THE GOSPEL CAN ACTUALLY BENEFIT FROM DIFFICULT PERSONAL CIRCUMSTANCES:

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)

INTRODUCTION:

What is our primary goal in life? What is our passion? What do we live for? For Paul the answer was easy: "*For me to live is Christ*" The advancement of the Gospel was foremost in his thinking. He was totally wrapped up in living out his divine commission to be the apostle to the Gentiles in proclaiming the good news of salvation in Christ. His personal circumstances or comforts in this life were not his primary concern.

We saw the importance of fellowship in the Gospel -- but how can some people have any impact for Christ given their other responsibilities or difficult circumstances in life? What chance do you have to advance the gospel when you work a fulltime job? When you are busy at home raising three children? When there is poor health or poverty or other hardships in your life?

Paul certainly didn't have what we would judge to be the most advantageous circumstances-- no big salary, no fancy office, no radio and TV ministry, no publishing house distributing his letters, no flock of servants to wait on him hand and foot. Instead, he was under house arrest in Rome and it appears that the pressure of his situation has been turned up a few notches with the immediate events surrounding his trial. He was concerned that believers such as his faithful supporters back in Philippi might misinterpret his difficulties and become disillusioned and discouraged. "*I want you to know, brethren*" (Note the importance of our personal testimony -- our silence can be taken the wrong way)

THE ADVANCEMENT OF THE GOSPEL CAN ACTUALLY BENEFIT FROM DIFFICULT PERSONAL CIRCUMSTANCES:

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)

cf. times of persecution throughout church history -- these have also been the times of most effective growth of the church -- not just in numbers but in depth of knowing God and fruitfulness in serving Him;
cf. the church today in China

I. (:12) STATEMENT OF HIS THESIS: THE ADVANCEMENT OF THE GOSPEL CAN ACTUALLY BENEFIT FROM DIFFICULT PERSONAL CIRCUMSTANCES

A. The Apostle Paul's Personal Circumstances Looked Bleak

"the things relating to me" -- trace his sufferings from Acts 16 when God began a good work in their hearts to the present; What difficult circumstances are you facing today?

cf. 2 Cor. 11:23-27; Acts 20:6 - 28:31

Paul did not focus on his personal difficulties and he did not want others to be burdened down in a wrong sense either; he knew how to focus on living for Christ and how to live above his circumstances

Transition: *"have fallen out rather"* -- the result of his difficult circumstances is unexpected from the natural perspective

B. These Difficult Circumstances Have Promoted the Advancement of the Gospel

word originally denoted making headway in spite of blows, and so depicted progress; verb is used in the sense of to promote, to further in the sense of prosperity and progress

Gromacki: "It was a military term, used of engineers who would prepare a road for the advancing army by removing obstructions such as rocks and trees. Paul did not view difficulty with self-pity. He was not concerned how circumstances affected him; rather, he asked the question: How can this problem be used to proclaim the gospel in a distinctive way? Paul saw a beginning in what some called an end, and he walked through open doors which others concluded to be closed and locked."

rooted here in a conviction of a Sovereign God who is working out His divine plan in history; able to transform seemingly bad circumstances into good results from the perspective of eternity

people are actively promoting all sorts of worthless causes:
"everybody seems to have a cause for which to speak;
loudly from the rooftops they proclaim the thing they seek;
often for a needless cause and often to deceive;
Should not we who know the Lord declare what we believe"

our materialistic culture is very interested in personal
advancement (job promotions, self-help courses, etc.);
but who has a heart for promoting God's interests?

same word in 1:25 '*progress in the faith*'

Do we have the same goal that Paul had? Can we look back over
the varied paths of our circumstances to see how God has been using
us to advance the gospel?

II. (:13-18) TWOFOLD EXPLANATION -- TWO POSITIVE RESULTS FROM HIS DIFFICULT CIRCUMSTANCES

What were these 2 Positive Results?

A. Showing Unbelievers the Reality of His Relationship to Christ

(not just by his words but by his life -- his attitude, how he
conducted himself, his concern for others as being more important
than himself, his humility -- cf. all of the positive Christian
traits Paul speaks of in this letter -- he was living them out)

"so that" -- introduces results

1. His bonds were an instrument of freedom and opportunity and
rejoicing rather than enslavement and limitation and bitterness

"bonds" -- sums up all of his varied difficult circumstances

2. His bonds were plainly seen by all to be in fellowship with
Christ and in His service rather than on account of any
wrongdoing -- his life was evident and clearly blameless;
His relationship to Christ was deep and real

1:1 Paul was first a bond-servant of Jesus Christ; nothing
could happen to him that was not under the control of His
Sovereign Master -- he never had the sense of desparation that
comes when you feel your life is out of control

3. The scope of his testimony was unlimited
 - a. the strategic palace guard (praetorian guards)
 - b. all other unbelievers as well throughout Rome and the empire

B. Showing Believers His Example of Joy and Faithfulness Which Gave Them Courage to Proclaim the Gospel

1. The gospel advances more effectively through the testimony of many than just through the testimony of one superstar

importance of the body functioning in healthy fashion

value of multiplying your ministry

2. There is a natural fear of witnessing that needs to be overcome in order for us to advance the gospel
3. The right response to difficult circumstances can mobilize the ministry of others by encouraging them to step out in faith
4. People might proclaim the gospel from either good or bad motivations
 - a. out of a sense of competition and personal ambition
envy speaking more of the internal emotions and *strife* of the resulting outward conflict
 - b. out of a genuine love and sense of good will

Turner: “As horrible and ungodly as this kind of thinking is, it should not surprise us that, living in the seat of power of the most powerful government on the face of the earth, some brethren could, and did, get caught up in the pursuit of power, striving out of envy for preeminence among the brethren.”

MacArthur: “Paul said his detractors were thinking to cause him distress during his imprisonment (v. 17). They weren't concerned with the church--with the purity of its doctrine or its growth. They just wanted to hurt Paul so they could be on top. ‘Thinking’ refers to planning and scheming. They came up with various ways to aggravate Paul's already distressing situation. By attacking his integrity, credibility, faithfulness, and character, they knew they would hurt him--and that, sad to say, was their objective.”

5. We should rejoice in the proclamation of the gospel regardless of the motives of the proclaimers or their

good or bad intentions towards us personally

(Note: not condoning their bad motivation, but emphasizing his primary goal of the advance of the gospel. The Holy Spirit can use the truth in the lives of others even where the spirit of the messenger is faulty.)

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DEVOTIONAL QUESTIONS:

- 1) What circumstances do you face that you feel limit your opportunity to preach the Gospel effectively to others? Maybe you sit at a desk job all day and have minimal contact with others. Maybe you are a housewife taking care of young children all day. How can you trust God to work in your situation to make you effective where you are for the spread of the Gospel? Do we look at obstacles at opportunities for God to do something special?
- 2) How has the bold example of other Christians in certain situations helped to give you courage and boldness to step out in faith? Where have you been an encouragement to others in this regard?
- 3) What level of cooperation should exist among those individuals and groups that are proclaiming a Gospel message that is orthodox in content? Why do we need to be careful about trying to expose impure motives on the part of others?
- 4) Do we rejoice in every instance where we see the true message of Christ and the true Gospel proclaimed? Or do we find it necessary to pick apart other ministries and point out all of the areas in which they differ from us?

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QUOTES FOR REFLECTION:

Boice: "Think how Paul must have lived to have this effect upon a corps of tough Roman soldiers. One prisoner looks much like another. The chain itself tells nothing, but the man himself does. Here was a man who had every right to be thinking about himself, but instead his talk was all of another. He spoke of Christ, even in prison. And even soldiers listened."

Gromacki: "In his analysis of the self-motivated preachers, Paul came to two conclusions. First, regardless of their motivation, the content of their message was orthodox. They did preach Christ (1:14, 15, 16, 18). Some have tried to identify this

group with the Judaizers, whom the apostle later condemned (3:1-2, 17-19). The Judaizers, however, preached a false gospel of salvation through legalistic works (II Cor. 11:13-15; Gal. 1:6-9). They preached another Christ, one whom Paul did not proclaim (II Cor. 11:4). There would be no way that he could have rejoiced over the erroneous content of the legalists. But this group, though wrongly motivated, was theologically correct in the doctrines of Christology and soteriology...

Second, Paul could rejoice over the proclamation of their message... He could not rejoice over their faulty motivation, but he could rejoice that their gospel was sound in content, that Christ was magnified, that sinners were regenerated, and that they themselves were saved brethren."

Motyer: "One factor had, in reality, controlled the past. As he looks back he can see it and it is something that is always true. It happens not just for apostles and special people. It is true for every believer, for in each and every case *'he who began a good work in you will bring it to completion at the day of Jesus Christ'* (1:6). God rules. The pressures of life are the hands of the Potter who is also our Father; the fires of life are those of the Refiner. He does not abandon the perfecting process to others; nor is he ever, in his sovereign greatness, knocked off course by the malpractice of evil men or by the weakness of good men. *'God is not man, that he should lie, or a son of man, that he should repent. Has he said, and will he not do it? Or has he spoken, and will he not fulfil it?'*"

Wiersbe: "Paul uses an interesting word in verse 16 -- *contention*. It means 'to canvass for office, to get people to support you.' Paul's aim was to glorify Christ and get people to follow Him; his critics' aim was to promote themselves and win a following of their own."

Walvoord: "Paul's entire experience recognized the wisdom of God in permitting Paul to suffer. Divine revelation offers the only satisfactory explanation as to why there is suffering in the world as a whole, and why even the godly suffer. Paul was in prison as a means of increasing his testimony, as an effective way to evangelize Rome, and to prepare him spiritually to write the prison epistles.

Although the reasons for suffering may not always be immediately apparent, by faith a Christian can assume *'that all things work together for good to them that love God'* (Ro 8:28). Many a great Christian was molded in character in the crucible of suffering, matured in loneliness, and prepared for greater usefulness in God's hands than if untouched by the storms of life."

Carson: "Put the advance of the gospel at the center of your aspirations."

Racer: "A Secure Call Amid Spiritual One-upmanship ... Rejoicing in Hardship is the overall theme of the section ... The Gospel minister must be secure in his calling and not worry about what others think of his ministry ... Paul was able to stir up and encourage others to minister in places where he was unable to go ... The Hallmark character of Gospel Ministry involves: Trusting in the Lord, Courage, Preaching from Good Will, from Love and from Pure Motives ... requires a heart of compassion that is

broken over the plight of lost people ... The troublemakers are most likely not Judaizers (unsaved) but insecure ministers of the true gospel message who desire a following of disciples that are loyal to themselves ... Humility is the key (cf. Christ's command forbidding a spirit of exclusivism in ministry – Luke 9:37-50) ... The end of the matter of Paul: Whatever the method, whatever the motive, as long as Christ is truly preached, I'll rejoice. We will each give an account of our own ministry to the Lord. Security is found in seeking Christ's approval alone."

MacArthur: "Paul lived to see the gospel proclaimed--he didn't care who received the credit. That's to be the attitude of every pastor, teacher, elder, deacon, leader, and layperson in the church. In all that he suffered Paul didn't quit, lash out, break down, or lose his joy. That's because the cause of Christ was being furthered and His name proclaimed. It was all he cared about. That's an attitude the grace of Christ instills in all who would be godly. Trials and slander are unendurable if handled in the flesh, but those in the Spirit need never lose their joy because of them."

TEXT: PHILIPPIANS 1:19-26

TITLE: THE FOCUS OF THE GOSPEL = EXALTING CHRIST

BIG IDEA:

**FOCUS ON EXALTING CHRIST AND YOU CAN COUNT ON
SUPERNATURAL BOLDNESS IN FRUITFUL MINISTRY --
ONE THAT WILL GLORIFY CHRIST
AND EFFECTIVELY IMPACT OTHERS**

**I. SUPERNATURAL BOLDNESS IN FRUITFUL MINISTRY COMES FROM
FOCUSING ON EXALTING CHRIST (:19-21)**

A. The Power of Intercessory Prayer and the Help of the Holy Spirit
Give Confidence that We Will Persevere in the Faith (:19)

Our own perseverance in the faith must be the foundation for any
ministry that will impact others

"*This*" -- must refer to the same antecedent as the "*this*" in v.18;
the fact that Christ is being proclaimed and exalted and the gospel
is making great progress as a result of Paul's difficult personal
circumstances

the proclamation of Christ whether from good motives or from bad
motives (to try to cause Paul distress) which in either case causes
Paul to rejoice

(cf. **Pentecost** and **Kent** -- reference to the general circumstances
of his imprisonment in Rome -- "this imprisonment experience")

"*Salvation*" --

1) most translations read "deliverance" as a reference to some type of
physical deliverance from prison for Paul.

cf. **Lenski** -- saved from the possibility that during the rest of
his trial before the imperial court he might disgrace Christ and the
gospel

cf. **Ryrie** -- "Paul's trial had probably begun. He was confident
that either release or death would advance the cause of Christ.

Dearborn argues that this cannot refer to his physical release
because he did not know what the outcome of his trial would be (but
he certainly expects to be released);

2) cf. **J. H. Michael** who argues persuasively for reference to his
ultimate vindication in court based on the same Greek wording in the
LXX of Job 13:16 -- he is confident that whether acquitted or
convicted, his stand for Christ will be vindicated (signifies

victory in a contest for what is right)

"The progress of the gospel on account of my imprisonment will lead to my ultimate vindication thru the power of intercessory prayer and the help of the Holy Spirit"

3) Paul consistently uses this word to refer to ultimate salvation, whether in its present or future (consummated) aspect. cf. 2:13 and similar emphasis on perseverance in 1:6. Difficulty lies in seeing connection between progress of the gospel and Paul's final salvation. Perhaps Paul was confident that the Philippians would recognize the evil motives of those preachers who were trying to exalt themselves at the expense of Paul and would respond by increased intercessory prayer that would help him persevere in his faith and in his testimony on the path to his ultimate salvation

B. Supernatural Boldness is the Key to a Ministry that Glorifies Christ (:20b)

C. Focusing on Exalting Christ is the Key to Being Able to Count on Such Supernatural Boldness in Ministry (:20a,21)

MacArthur: "The extent of Paul's confidence may be seen by his use of the Greek word apokaradokia, translated 'earnest expectation.' It's 'a picturesque word, denoting a state of keen anticipation of the future, the craning of the neck to catch a glimpse of what lies ahead' (Ralph P. Martin, New Century Bible: Philippians [Greenwood, S.C.: Attic Press, 1976], pp. 75-76). Paul rejoiced that he would never be put to shame before the world, the court of Caesar, or God Himself because he knew God would be glorified in his life."

II. THE PURPOSE OF THIS LIFE IS FRUITFUL MINISTRY -- ONE THAT GLORIFIES CHRIST AND BENEFITS OTHERS (:22-26)

A. The Opportunity for Continued Fruitful Ministry Counterbalances Our Desire to Escape the Difficulties of This Life and Enter Glory (:22-24)

cf. being caught between a rock and a hard place
Christian is caught between 2 great alternatives: eternal glory and fruitful ministry in this life

(**Hendriksen**)

REMAINING
temporary residence; tent

VS.

DEPARTING
permanent abode in heaven

suffering mixed with joy
suffering for a little while
absent from the Lord physically

the fight
realm of sin
oppty to live by faith and
have fruitful ministry

joy unmixed with suffering
joy forever
at home with the Lord
(no purgatory or soul-sleep)
the feast
realm of complete sinlessness
living by sight; receiving
rewards for fruitful ministry

Pentecost: "The apostle who has such a vision of glory before him is perfectly content to forego his entrance into glory, not because he is afraid of death, but because he has a proper perspective of his ministry growing out of a proper perspective of the place the Lord Jesus Christ has in his life. You wouldn't have to urge the Apostle Paul to pursue the ministry given to him. Why not? Because Christ is life to him. You wouldn't have to exhort the apostle to be faithful to the privilege entrusted to him. Why not? Because Christ is the center of his life. You wouldn't have to warn Paul about the danger of defection. Why not? Because Christ is the center of his life. You wouldn't have to warn Paul about the danger of temptation. Why not? Because Christ is the center of his life. When Christ becomes the center of a man's life here and now, all areas of his life fall into proper place; he assumes the privileges and opportunities God affords him--willingly and gladly and sacrificially, because living is Christ. ... Christian living is finding the proper center and then letting life revolve around that center."

B. Fruitful Ministry Involves Fellowship in the Gospel that Furthers the Gospel (effectively impacts others) and Focuses on Exalting Christ (:25-26)

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DEVOTIONAL QUESTIONS:

- 1) Is our practice of self-denial in our Christian life primarily focused on our own spiritual advancement or on the impact of our ministry and testimony on others? Are we driven by choosing to do that which is "*more necessary for your sake*"? What value do we place on producing fruit for Christ as opposed to our own comfort in living?
- 2) Can we have this same expectation of *no shame* and *boldness* in proclamation that Paul experienced? What are some of the prerequisites and mindsets to achieve this?
- 3) You have heard it said that "a person is not really ready to live until he is ready to

die." How did Paul exemplify this sentiment? What is our perspective towards death?

4) How does this passage refute the Roman Catholic notion of some disciplinary state of purgatory or some transitional unconscious state in between our death and our enjoyment of fellowship with the Lord?

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QUOTES FOR REFLECTION:

MacArthur: Review

I. JOY IN SPITE OF TROUBLE (vv. 12-14)

II. JOY IN SPITE OF DETRACTORS (vv. 15-18)

III. JOY IN SPITE OF DEATH (vv. 19-21)

IV. JOY IN SPITE OF THE FLESH (vv. 22-26)

Carson: Re summary of Chapter 1

1. Put the fellowship of the gospel at the center of your relationships with believers.
2. Put the priorities of the gospel at the center of your prayer life.
3. Put the advance of the gospel at the center of your aspirations.
4. Put the converts of the gospel at the center of your principled self-denial.

Bruce: "Paul's deep desire and hope is not for his own safety but for the progress of the gospel, the perseverance of his converts, and the accomplishment of God's redeeming purpose."

Gromacki: "Most people want life without death rather than life with death. The natural desire of humans is to live, not to die. Those who choose death over life usually want relief from suffering or depression. The case of Paul, however, was much different. He had to determine where he wanted to live. Today, people make choices about living in the city or in the country, and about residing in the north or in the sun belt. The apostle debated the advantages and disadvantages of living on earth with living in heaven; thus, his approach toward death was unique."

Martin: "He is confident that he can count upon two kinds of aid at this time, human (*your prayer*) and divine (*the supply of the Spirit of Jesus Christ*). Nothing is more impressive of Paul's large humanity than his constant appeal for the prayers of his converts (see Rom. xv.30; 2 Cor. i.11; Col. iv.3; 1 Thes. v.25). He shows, too, his dependence upon the Spirit who dwelt so richly in Jesus Christ (cf. Acts xvi. 7, RV)."

Mounce: "The apostle's expectation was twofold: that he would not be *ashamed* (i.e., be disappointed by the failure of divine help), and that Christ would *be magnified* ... in his body (the natural sphere for the outward expression of the inner man)."

Motyer: "Examination will show that his certainty belongs to the realm of ambition: he knows what he is heading for; uncertainty belongs to the realm of out-working: he is not sure just how things will work out..."

Christian hope makes the outcome certain but leaves open both the time of fulfillment and the means by which the goal is reached...

When a Christian dies all the uncertainties and dangers lie behind: the uncertainties and dangers whether of camp-life or of temporary stay in a foreign port. All the certainties and safeties lie ahead in the presence of Christ. And this, in the second place, is the blessedness of Christian death. The Christian goes to be with Christ. Scripture leaves so much about life after death undescribed, but on this central fact there is not hesitation: the Christian dead are *'with Christ.'*"

MacArthur: 'Paul's great desire was to serve and glorify God, wherever that might be and whatever the cost to himself. Yet such singlemindedness often characterizes those building earthly kingdoms more than those who ought to be building God's kingdom. The Puritan Thomas Brooks said, 'Be ashamed, Christians, that worldlings are more studious and industrious to make sure of pebbles, than you are to make sure of pearls' (The Golden Treasury of Puritan Quotations, I.D.E. Thomas, ed. [Edinburgh: Banner of Truth Trust, 1977], p. 258). Is your life given to serving and glorifying God in the way that so many in this world are given to serving and glorifying themselves? ...

Philippians 1:12-26 shows a man content to be where God placed him. He would have been as content to go and be with Christ as to stay and serve the needs of Christ's church. That's because Paul's heart and mind were set on heaven and fulfilling the desires of heaven's master; his contentment was a by-product of his focus. Yet often we find ourselves discouraged and discontent because of our circumstances. Thomas Watson wrote, 'Spiritual things satisfy; the more of heaven is in us, the less earth will content us.... Fly aloft in your affections, thirst after the graces and comforts of the Spirit; the eagle that flies above in the air, fears not the stinging of the serpent; the serpent creeps on his belly, and stings only such creatures as go upon the earth' (The Art of Divine Contentment [Glasgow: Free Presbyterian Publications, n.d.], pp. 97-98). Consider what your heart and mind are set on. If they're set on the right things, you'll be content with the circumstances in which God has placed you."

Racer: "Bold Living in Troubled Times ...

Introduction – Beltway Sniper shootings causing people to live in fear ... where is our security? We don't want to live in bondage to fear.

How do we live a bold life?

- must have a life consecrated to God – fully submitted to Lordship of Christ
- must be living a servant life
- must have conviction of work that yet remains to be finished – sense that I am indestructible until my work here on earth is done; Commit ourselves to fully LIVE until we die; some people DIE before they actually die"

TEXT: PHILIPPIANS 1:27 - 2:2

TITLE: THE TYPE OF LIFE THAT IS WORTHY OF THE GOSPEL

BIG IDEA:

THE GOSPEL OF CHRIST SHOULD INSPIRE LOYAL SOLIDARITY (TRUE UNITY) AND SUPERNATURAL CALM AS WE STRIVE TOGETHER TO FURTHER THE GOSPEL (WHILE ACCEPTING THE INEVITABILITY OF PERSECUTION)

I. (1:27a) THE GOSPEL OF CHRIST SHOULD BE THE INSPIRATION FOR OUR LIFESTYLE

A. General Exhortation (1:27a) *"Only conduct yourselves in a manner worthy of the Gospel of Christ"*

What value do we place on the gospel?
What type of a benchmark does the gospel provide for our lifestyle?
Opposition should not discourage us or tone down our level of commitment.

B. Specific Reasons (2:1) -- the fruit of the gospel in our life should inspire us to live worthy of such a high, privileged calling

1. Encouragement from being united with Christ

called alongside to aid; comfort and strengthening especially needed in context of suffering;
It is part of the prophet's task to bring comfort (Is.40:1);

2. Comfort, Consolation stemming from love

(these first 2 are synonyms)
Christ is spoken of as *"the consolation of Israel"* (Lk. 2:25 -- fulfillment of Messianic hope with all that involved)
cf. 1 Cor. 1:10; Eph. 4:1; Rom. 15:4-5; 2 Cor. 1

3. Fellowship generated and maintained by the Spirit

Subjective Genitive = fellowship produced by the Spirit (which would have to result in:)

Objective Gen. = fellowship with the Spirit -- an actual participation in the Spirit and in all of His benefits (which

would have to be produced by the Spirit as well)

4. Compassions and Mercies (affection and sympathy)

2 Cor. 1:3; Col. 3:12

Boice: "How does the matter of Christian unity stand with you? Are there divisions that ought not to exist? Are there hard feelings? Are there rationalizations for divisive, non-Christian conduct?"

How does our lifestyle measure up to these glorious blessings of the Gospel?

2 characteristics should be evident:

loyal solidarity

supernatural calm

II. (1:27b; 2:2) LOYAL SOLIDARITY IN STRIVING TOGETHER TO FURTHER THE GOSPEL

A. Motivation -- not only because this lifestyle is consistent with the gospel, but such loyal solidarity is expected and meets with the approval of spiritual leaders

"whether I come and see you or remain absent, I may hear of you"

"make my joy complete"

B. Method

"standing firm in one spirit with one mind"

"being of the same mind"

"maintaining the same love"

"united in spirit"

C. Mission

"striving together for the faith of the Gospel"

"intent on one purpose" = the furthering of the Gospel and the magnifying of Christ

III. (1:28-30) SUPERNATURAL CALM IN ACCEPTING THE INEVITABILITY OF PERSECUTION

A. Significance of Supernatural Calm

1. What it signifies about the ultimate destiny of your opponents
2. What it signifies about your ultimate destiny

(cf. 2 Thess. 1:4-6 – “*This is a plain indication of God’s righteous judgment*”)

B. Inevitability of Conflict --

the Source of the Conflict is the same as the Source of Salvation

C. Privilege of Fellowship With Christ in Suffering

"for Christ's sake"

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DEVOTIONAL QUESTIONS:

- 1) What types of attitudes threaten the unity and solidarity of our local assembly? Are we secure enough in our unity together that we can be aggressive in reaching out to others with the gospel and contending for the faith or are we primarily passive and focused on protecting ourselves? What difference is there between union and unity? Think of the parallel to a soccer team ... what types of attitudes make for a good player vs. a player who actually hurts the team?
- 2) Is our conduct the same whether authority figures (like the apostle Paul) are present to observe us or absent? Are we the same person in every situation in life or do our responses and lifestyle vary depending on whom we are with at the time?
- 3) Do we look at persecution and suffering for the gospel as part of our divine calling or as some type of unexpected aberration?
- 4) How can we be of the *"same mind"* while still thinking independently and not being puppets that automatically subscribe to whatever is being voiced from the pulpit?

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QUOTES FOR REFLECTION:

Kent: "Exhortation to Unity and Courage in View of External Foes -- Failure of the church to be intimidated by enemies was a token of the ultimate failure of the enemies of God. The adversaries may not have recognized this, but it was nonetheless a sign that their attacks were futile and that the church would prevail ... it was a sign to them of two things: their ultimate destruction and the salvation of the believers."

Boice: "If believers will conduct themselves in a manner that leads to Christian unity, then they will find that this also leads them to strive together to advance the Christian Gospel. And the result will be an aggressive Christianity. The Christians at Philippi knew what it meant to stand fast as Romans at the frontiers of the Roman world. They knew the obligation that was theirs to advance Roman rule in the face of barbarism. In the same way, Paul would have them united for an aggressive advancement of the faith. How we need to recover an aggressive faith today! For the most part Christianity in our day has retreated into spiritual ghettos, and believers seem content -- to have it that way so long as they are safe and their children never wander beyond the barricades."

Barclay: "But on this occasion Paul uses a word which he very seldom uses to express his meaning, and to paint his picture. Normally the word which Paul uses for to behave oneself or to conduct oneself in the ordinary affairs of life is *peripatein*, which literally means to walk about; here he uses the word *politeuesthai*, which means to be a citizen; *polites* is the Greek for a citizen. Paul was writing from the very centre of the Roman Empire, from Rome itself; it was the fact that he was a Roman citizen that had brought him there at all. Philippi was a Roman colony; and Roman colonies were little bits of Rome planted throughout the world. In Roman colonies the Roman citizens never forgot that they were Romans. They spoke the Latin language, wore the Latin dress, called their magistrates by the Latin names, insisted on being stubbornly Roman, however far they might be from Rome. So what Paul is saying is this, 'You and I know full well the privileges and the responsibilities of being a Roman citizen. You know full well how even in Philippi, so many miles from Rome, you must still live and act as a Roman does. Well then, remember that you have an even higher duty than that. Wherever you are you must live as befits a citizen of the Kingdom of God; you must never forget the privileges and the responsibilities of citizenship, not this time of Rome, but of the Kingdom of God.' So, then, a Christian must ever remember the Kingdom of which he is a citizen, and his conduct must befit his citizenship."

Gromacki: "The Philippians lost some of their joy when they heard about the arrest and the subsequent imprisonments of Paul. Their joy was further lessened when they heard about the terminal sickness of Epaphroditus (2:26-28). They were totally unaware that Paul was rejoicing in the midst of his adversity. They wanted the apostle to have joy; but instead, they themselves were in need of it.

The apostle, of course, could not have total joy as long as the church was marked by sadness. In addition, when believers are not rejoicing in the Lord they will be marked by divisiveness, pride, and selfishness. To correct the situation, Paul issued a direct command: '*Fulfill ye my joy*' (2:2)."

Wuest: Translation of 2:1

"In view of the fact that there is a certain ground of appeal in Christ which exhorts, since there is a certain tender persuasion that comes from divine love, in view of the fact that there is a certain joint-participation with the Spirit in a common interest and activity, since there are certain tenderheartednesses and compassionate yearnings and actions."

Piper: " Which is why Paul defines living worthy of the gospel as living in unity with each other and living in fearlessness toward opponents. Living worthy of the gospel means that *'to live is Christ'*--and so he becomes the center of our life and our unity; living worthy of the gospel means that *'to die is gain'*--and that promise takes away our opponents' last weapon (death) and takes away our last fear.

Unified striving together for the gospel and fearlessness before our opponents are the two ways that Paul says are at the heart of living worthy of the gospel.

And since they show the worth of the gospel so powerfully, Paul calls them in v. 28b a sign from God. When we live in unity and when we stand courageously and unafraid and humbly and lovingly before our opponents this is a sign that the gospel is indeed true and that therefore those who believe it are saved and those who don't believe it are perishing.

So there are many reasons for a series like this. But perhaps the most important one is that we are called to live worthy of the gospel. We are called to live in a way that shows the worth and value of the gospel--that we prize the gospel more than anything in the world. We are called to show that our treasure is not in this world, our hope is not in money and earthly security, our satisfaction is not in power and prestige, our contentment is not in the approval of other people, our happiness is not in avoiding criticism and slander.

Instead, our treasure and hope and satisfaction and contentment and happiness are in Christ and his promises: to live is Christ and to die is gain. Unity in Christ and fearlessness before our opponents make the worth of the Gospel clear. So the call to courage in these messages is a call to magnify the worth of the Gospel and glorify the all-satisfying value of Christ."

Turner: "The Philippians had been granted grace or favor in that they were not just allowed to believe in Christ, but to suffer for Him also. After the apostles had been condemned and beaten by the council, it is said, 'So they departed from the presence of the council, rejoicing that they were counted worthy to suffer shame for His name' (Acts 5:41). And Peter wrote, 'But even if you should suffer for righteousness sake, {you are} blessed. And do not be afraid of their threats, nor be troubled' (I Peter 3:14). Christians ought to think it an honor when they are permitted to suffer for the name of Christ."

Racer: "Days of suffering are coming for the Western Church. Imperative that we stay and bear fruit rather than seek path of escapism. Must view suffering as a high calling.

Discipleship will cost you something; it is expensive; but the rewards are great.”

TEXT: PHILIPPIANS 2:3-4

TITLE: THE SECRET TO HUMBLING OURSELVES

BIG IDEA:

THE SECRET TO HUMBLING OURSELVES LIES IN MAKING OTHERS GREAT -- BOTH IN OUR PERSPECTIVE AND IN OUR PURSUITS

INTRODUCTION:

Most valuable secrets involve something people long to know and try their hardest to discover. Unless someone carefully conceals such a secret it reproduces rapidly until it cannot be labelled a secret any longer. Here we have a secret that God is trying to reveal, but no one seems to want to discover it or put it into practice.

I. THE TWO ENEMIES OF HUMILITY

A. Selfish Ambition

"Do nothing from selfishness"

B. Vanity, Empty Conceit

"or empty conceit"

Gromacki: "Someone has said that vainglory is the disease whereas strife is the symptom. The former is inward and the latter is outward."

II. MAKE OTHERS GREAT IN OUR PERSPECTIVE BY VALUING THEM MORE HIGHLY THAN OURSELVES

"but with humility of mind let each of you regard one another as more important than himself"

Martin: "This consideration of the excellencies in another's character, and especially the picture of One who was *'meek and lowly (tapeinos) in heart'* (Mt. xi. 29) will check any tendency to *'vainglory'*, i.e. pride in our own moral attainments, on the one hand, and merciless fault-finding with someone else's failings, on the other hand."

III. MAKE OTHERS GREAT IN OUR PURSUITS BY MAKING THE PROSPERITY OF OTHERS A HIGHER PRIORITY THAN OUR OWN PROSPERITY

"do not merely look out for your own personal interests, but also for the

interests of others."

* * * * *

DEVOTIONAL QUESTIONS:

- 1) What makes pride so "empty"? Why is the pursuit of selfish interests characterized as "vainglory"? How are the Pharisees a good example of the pursuit of religious activities from a motivation of "*selfishness and empty conceit*"? Do we take time to allow the Lord to search our hearts to expose our selfish motivations?
- 2) How did the Roman citizens of Paul's day view this Christian concept of "*humility of mind*"? How do our friends and co-workers mis-interpret this spirit? Why can't they see straight in this area?
- 3) How would we use our time and money and resources and talents differently if we truly regarded our brothers and sisters in our local church as "*more important*" than ourselves?
- 4) How can parents use verse 4 with their children to help foster a spirit of unselfishness in the home? What are some practical ways younger children can implement this truth?

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QUOTES FOR REFLECTION:

Wiersbe: "The humble person is not one who thinks meanly of himself; he simply does not think of himself at all! (I think Andrew Murray said that.) Humility is that grace that, when you know you have it, you have lost it... the believer's eyes are turned away from himself and focused on the needs of others."

Bruce: Quoting **James Montgomery:**

The bird that soars on highest wing
Builds on the ground her lowly nest,
And she that doth most sweetly sing
Sings in the night, when all things rest.
In lark and nightingale we see
What honor hath humility.

The saint, that wears heaven's brightest crown,
In lowliest adoration bends;
The weight of glory bends him down
Then most, when most his soul ascends;
Nearest the throne of God must be

The footstool of humility."

Motyer: "But Paul's joy is not in the wellbeing of the church in general, but specifically in a church living the gospel life of unity in mind, heart and will, devoted to the task of unselfish mutual care."

Martin: "The ethical terms used here expose the spiritual malaise at the heart of the church, and point to the all-sufficient remedy. *Strife, eritheia* (RV, '*faction*') is the same word as in i.16 where it is rendered '*contention*', and used to describe the inimical intention of Paul's enemies. Of the Philippians it is used of party squabbles and petty conceits. We might translate it '*quarrelsomeness*', although that does not quite convey the hint of self-seeking which the word contains."

Pentecost: "Until Jesus Christ is formed in Paul's spiritual children, he is not happy or content. Beloved of God, until the love of Christ does its transforming work, takes us off the pedestal and puts Christ on it; until the love of Christ does its transforming work to the point we are no longer the center of our own interest but the brethren become the center -- until then, we have not reached the likeness of Christ."

Racer: "Unity doesn't mean we all are robotically cookie cutters; unity is built on foundational things of Christian connection; in times of persecution, doctrinal distinctives get pushed down to proper order of priority ... you can't afford to be too nit-picky. You can work together towards some more general common objectives from a platform of fundamental unity even though you have doctrinal distinctives that are going to determine which church you promote.

- The Mindset of Unity – can't do anything from perspective of selfishness
- The Ministry of Unity – actively performing certain functions that further the interests of others; ministering in a way that meets their needs

Humility does not have to do with thinking too highly or lowly of self; rather it is to not think of self at all; Perfect quietness of heart where you expect nothing, you wonder at nothing done to you; you are content with the Lord despite troubling circumstances all around; you are at peace and rest in your soul."

TEXT: PHILIPPIANS 2:5-11

TITLE: CHRIST OUR PATTERN

BIG IDEA:

THE PATTERN FOR BOTH HUMBLING OURSELVES AND BEING EXALTED BY GOD IS JESUS CHRIST

1 Peter 5:6 *"Humble yourselves, therefore, under the mighty hand of God, that He may exalt you at the proper time."*

Otherwise, if we try to exalt ourselves, God must come along and humble us.

Remember the Greek people were a proud people and the Jews were filled with nationalistic pride.

Gromacki: "Paradoxically, he illustrated exhortation with doctrine, whereas most preachers try to make their doctrinal sermons practical."

I. THE PATTERN FOR HUMBLING OURSELVES IS JESUS CHRIST (:5-8)

A. Humbling in Mind -- Christ's Mindset Chose Service to Others Over Personal Rights (:5-7)

1. We must keep on thinking like Christ

"Have this attitude in yourselves which was also in Christ Jesus."

speaking of that inner disposition to seek the prosperity of others

2. We cannot hold on to our personal rights

"who, although He existed in the form of God, did not regard equality with God a thing to be grasped"

Jesus' existence did not begin in the manger in Bethlehem or even in the womb of Mary.

Pentecost: "If these Greeks should think they have a superior vantage point, how much superior was the vantage point of the Son of God, for He was not the most exalted among men, He was the eternal Son of the eternal God. If any had a right to consider Himself, a right to express His own rights, it was Jesus Christ."

Wycliffe: "Though in His pre-incarnate state he possessed the

essential qualities of God, he did not consider his status of divine equality a prize to be selfishly hoarded"

morphe, form, in verses 6 and 7 denotes a permanent expression of essential attributes, while *schema, fashion* (v8), refers to outward appearance that is subject to change

Our Lord was in the form of God. Thus the outward expression of His inmost being was as to its nature the expression of the divine essence of Deity.

context is speaking of the outward expression (not the inward possession) of the divine attributes

3. We must empty ourselves in order to serve others (seek their prosperity and welfare above his own personal interests)
"but emptied Himself, taking the form of a bond-servant, and being made in the likeness of men."

Christ did not empty himself of His Deity, but of the rights and privileges and full manifestation of that Deity

Wycliffe: "unlike the first Adam, who made a frantic attempt to seize equality with God (Gen 3:5), Jesus, the last Adam (1 Cor. 15:47), humbled himself and obediently accepted the role of the Suffering Servant"

Active process of humbling himself began with the Incarnation but extended much further

Gromacki: "Christ surrendered the independent exercise of His divine attributes. In the incarnation, he yielded His will to that of the Father. He was God manifest in the flesh. Therefore He possessed the attributes, but He used them only under the control of the Holy Spirit and within the will of the Father for His earthly life."

B. Humbling in Action -- Christ's Obedience Was Absolute and Humiliating (:8)

1. The mindset must be accompanied by the action
 - a. the mindset -- *"having been found in likeness as a man"*
 - b. the action -- *"He humbled Himself"*
the word means "to make or bring low"

2. Christ's obedience was Absolute -- "*unto death*"
"up to the point of" -- not obedient to death, for He remained the Master of all and willingly yielded up His spirit

substitutionary atonement for sin

3. Christ's obedience was Humiliating -- "*even the death of the cross*"

II. THE PATTERN FOR BEING EXALTED BY GOD IS JESUS CHRIST (:9-11)

- A. God has Exalted Christ to the Position of Absolute Supremacy (:9)

"Therefore also God highly exalted Him, and bestowed on Him the name which is above every name"

MacArthur: Christ's exaltation was thus fourfold: resurrection, ascension, coronation, and intercession. He rose from the dead and ascended into heaven. There He was seated on the throne of God to intercede as High Priest of His people. He sympathizes with us (Heb. 4:15); who is "*holy, innocent, undefiled, separated from sinners and exalted above the heavens*" (Heb. 7:26); and "*always lives to make intercession for [believers]*" (Heb. 7:25). Just as the descent of Christ into humiliation was in steps (He was in the form of God but willing to let that go; humbled Himself; became a servant; was made in the likeness of men; was found in fashion as a man; and was obedient to the point of death, even death on a cross [Phil. 2:5-8; see pp. xx-xx]), so His resurrection, ascension, coronation, and intercession show the steps of His exaltation by God.

- B. The Lordship of Jesus Christ Will Ultimately Be Recognized by Universal Submission to the Glory of God (:10-11)
(cf. Is. 45:23)

Wycliffe: the totality of created rational beings will pay due homage.

1. Bowing Down in Worship

"that at the name of Jesus every knee should bow, of those who are in heaven, and on earth, and under the earth"

2. Confession of Lordship

"and that every tongue should confess that Jesus Christ is Lord, to the glory of God the Father"

Implications for Gospel Invitations: no separation between Jesus as Savior and Jesus as Lord. You must receive Him for who He truly is – which includes His inherent Lordship.

MacArthur: The lordship of Jesus Christ is a crucial issue. Many in our day seem to believe they can accept the work of Christ on the cross apart from worshiping Him as King. Nearly 100 years ago Charles Haddon Spurgeon wrote, "I cannot conceive it possible for anyone truly to receive Christ as Saviour and yet not to receive him as Lord. One of the first instincts of a redeemed soul is to fall at the feet of the Saviour, and gratefully and adoringly to cry, 'Blessed Master, bought with thy precious blood, I own that I am thine,--thine only, thine wholly, thine for ever. Lord, what wilt thou have me to do?' A man who is really saved by grace does not need to be told that he is under solemn obligations to serve Christ; the new life within him tells him that. Instead of regarding it as a burden, he gladly surrenders himself--body, soul, and spirit, to the Lord who has redeemed him, reckoning this to be his reasonable service" (Metropolitan Tabernacle Pulpit, vol. 56 [Pasadena, Tex.: Pilgrim Publications, 1979], p. 617). Take a moment now to acknowledge the lordship of Christ in your own life--it is only your reasonable service to do so.

Application: if each one would set aside self in the same way and humble himself, the church would achieve true unity and be effective in its proclamation of the gospel

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DEVOTIONAL QUESTIONS:

- 1) What are some specific examples from your chronicles *of your own church interaction where a larger dose of humility and the mind of Christ* could have helped to smooth over some rough times?
- 2) In what ways can we *empty ourselves* and take on the task of being a servant to others in the church?
- 3) In what way is the '*name of Jesus*' exalted above every other name? How is the common use of the Lord's name in vain especially distressing?
- 4) How am I living in such a way that my life is professing the Lordship of Jesus Christ?

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QUOTES FOR REFLECTION:

Motyer: "Concerning the state to which the Lord Jesus consigned himself, Paul makes three points. First, the intention of the great change was obedient service; he took the form of a slave. Secondly, the sphere in which the service would be discharged was that of a true humanity he was *born in the likeness of men*. Thirdly, his true humanity 'left room' for that other reality which he brought with him. It was a true humanity: Paul uses again the word *form*, already discussed; but this time of the slave-state. The

Son become the reality of a bondservant. None of this reality is taken away by the careful phrase *in the likeness of men*; this leaves room for the other side of his nature, the divine, in the likeness of which he did not appear. His likeness to men was real, but it did not express his whole self."

Motyer: Re the significance of the Ascension: "Therefore, before the eyes of chosen witnesses the Father gave visible demonstration of his estimation of Jesus: that he is Lord of all, heaven, earth and hell alike, that his deity is unquestionable, for he is worshipped in heaven where none can be worshipped but God only, and that he has now emerged from incognito into his full and acknowledged possession of the divine name and Lordship. The historical, physical event of the ascension is a moral and spiritual comment on Jesus."

Boice: "What do these verses contain? The answer is that they contain most of the distinctive articles of the Christian creed. They teach the divinity of Christ, His pre-existence, His equality with God the Father, His incarnation and true humanity, His voluntary death on the cross, the certainty of His ultimate triumph over evil, and the permanence of His ultimate reign. How foolish in the light of these statements are the views of scholars who attempt to dismiss the distinct doctrines of Christianity as late developments in the history of an historically conditioned and slowly evolving Church. There was no evolution of these doctrines. There were repeated attempts to clarify them. The history of theology is full of examples. There were often advances in the direction of a fuller understanding of their significance. Many teachers have brought additional insights. But the doctrines themselves were always known. Christianity is Christ -- this Christ. And these things were believed about Him from the beginning."

Boice: Re the Sovereignty of Jesus as God -- "Jesus rules as God rules. Today He controls even the smallest things of life. One day He will subdue His enemies forever..."

The doctrine of the sovereignty of God or the sovereignty of Jesus Christ has sometimes been called fatalism by enemies of the Gospel. But it is not fatalism at all. A belief in fatalism or fate is found in the Moslem religion, where it is referred to as 'kismet,' which means fate. Fate is the impersonal force by which the universe is supposed by Muslims to operate. It is supposed to operate in ways that are totally insensitive to the needs or ends of the individuals. This is not the Christian teaching. The Bible teaches that the God who controls all things is not an impersonal deity, but a God who loves us and who orders the events of our lives to lead us forward in line with His perfect and desirable will. It is not meaningless or tragic when difficulties enter your life or when there are temptations. God knows about it. And He has even permitted it to come in order that He might accomplish something in you that will be for your good."

Walvoord: "How little our sacrifices, our acts of unselfishness, and our suffering the slights of men seem in the shadow of that cross. If Christ was willing to do this for us, what stands in the way of our forgiving others and having complete spiritual fellowship with all those of like mind in Christ? This eloquent portrayal of the example of Christ

as triumphant in His work and service must have had a telling effect upon the Philippian church and should today cut through the pride and foolish self-interest which often keeps Christians from having the mind of Christ."

Barclay: "Christian greatness and Christian fellowship alike depend on the renunciation of self, and are destroyed by the exaltation of self. Selfishness, self-seeking and self-display destroy our likeness to Christ and our fellowship with each other..."

In the Philippian Church there were men whose one aim was to gratify a selfish ambition; the one aim of Jesus was to serve others, no matter what depths of self-renunciation that service might cost. In the Philippian Church there were those whose one aim was to focus men's eyes upon God. So the follower of Christ must think always, not of himself but of others, not of his own glory but of the glory of God."

Carson: "Not for a moment can this passage be used to support universalism; that is, the view that every single person in the entire world will finally be saved... The text promises that Jesus has the last word, that he is utterly vindicated, that in the end no opposition against him will stand. There will not be universal salvation; there will be universal confession as to who he is."

Wiersbe: "The test of the submissive mind is not just how much we are willing to take in terms of suffering, but how much we are willing to give in terms of sacrifice."

MacArthur:

Morphe expresses the essential character of something--what it is in itself. *Schema* emphasizes outward form or appearance. What *morphe* expresses never changes, while what *schema* represents can. For example, all men possess manhood. They possess manhood from the time they are conceived until they die. That is their *morphe*. But the essential character of manhood is shown in various *schema*. At one time a man is an embryo, then a baby, then a child, then a boy, then a youth, then a young man, then an adult, and finally an old man. The *morphe* of manhood remains the same, but the *schema* changes. In using the word *morphe* in Philippians 2, Paul was saying Jesus possessed the unchangeable essential nature of God. That interpretation of the first phrase of verse 6 is strengthened by the second phrase, which says Jesus was equal with God. Being in the form of God speaks of Christ's equality to God. . .

The Greek word translated "equality" (*isos*) describes things exactly equal in size, quantity, quality, character, and number. The English word *isomer* comes from it. Isomers are chemical molecules that vary according to structure from each other, but are identical according to atomic elements and weights. We could say their forms are different while their essential character is the same. Isomorph (equal form), isometric (equal measures), and isosceles triangle (a triangle with two sides of equal measure), are all English terms descriptive of equality. Christ is equal to God, and existed in the form of God. A literal rendering of the Greek text into English is: "He did not regard the being equal with God"--a tremendous affirmation of the divinity of Christ. The first step in the humiliation of Christ was that He did not hold on to equality with God. Yet though He did not cling to that equality, there is no question that Jesus

claimed it and that the people who heard Him knew He claimed it. . . .

What did Christ empty Himself of?

A.He Remained God

Christ did not empty Himself of His deity. He is co-existent with the Father and the Spirit, and for Him to have become less than God would have meant the Trinity would have ceased to exist. Christ could not become less than who He truly is. Christ didn't exchange deity for humanity. Only God can die and conquer death, create, do miracles, and speak as Christ did. Christ retained His divine nature.

B.He Renounced His Privileges

1.Heavenly glory

However our Lord did give up His heavenly glory. As C.S. Lewis put it, He dove into the water and went all the way down through the black cold water to the slime and ooze of this world. That's why in John 17:5 Jesus prayed, *"Glorify Thou Me together with Thyself, Father, with the glory which I had with Thee before the world was."* Christ gave up the glory of a face-to-face relationship with God for the muck of this earth. He gave up the adoring presence of angels for the spittle of men. He gave up the shining brilliance of heavens glories and emptied Himself. Every now and then on earth the glory of Christ peaked through, such as on the Mount of Transfiguration (Luke 9:28-36). There were glimpses of Christ's glory in His miracles, attitude, words, at the cross, at His resurrection, and at His ascension. But Christ emptied Himself of the continuous outward manifestation and personal enjoyment of heavenly glory.

2.Independent authority

Christ emptied Himself of His independent authority. He completely submitted Himself to the will of the Father and learned to be a servant. Philippians 2:8 says He was obedient, and we see that illustrated when He said in the garden, *"Not as I will, but as Thou wilt"* (Matt. 26:39). *"He learned obedience from the things which He suffered"* (Heb. 5:8), and affirmed that He came to do His Father's will (John 5:30)--not His own.

3.Divine prerogatives

He set aside the prerogatives of His deity--the voluntary use of His attributes. He did not stop being omniscient or omnipresent. He remained omniscient--He knew what was in man (John 2:25). He was omnipresent--though not physically present, He saw Nathaniel under a tree (John 1:45-49). He didn't give up any of His deity but He did give up the free exercise of His attributes, limiting Himself to the point of saying that He did not know the time of His second coming (Matt. 24:36).

4.Eternal riches

He gave up His personal riches. *"Though He was rich, yet for [our] sake He became poor, that [we] through His poverty might become rich"* (2 Cor. 8:9). Christ was poor in this world; He owned very little.

5.A favorable relationship

God "*made Him who knew no sin to be sin on our behalf*" (2 Cor. 5:21). As a result our Lord cried out on the cross, "*My God, My God, why hast Thou forsaken Me?*"

TEXT: PHILIPPIANS 2:12-18

TITLE: PERSEVERE IN THE PATH OF HUMILITY

BIG IDEA:

JOYFULLY PERSEVERE IN HUMBLE SERVICE TO MAINTAIN A BLAMELESS TESTIMONY

Introduction:

The path of humble service -- seeking the prosperity of others above our own personal interests -- is not the path we would naturally choose. In fact we shrink back from such a challenge. How can such a life be possible?

I. (:12-13) GOD MAKES IT POSSIBLE FOR US TO PERSEVERE IN HUMBLE SERVICE

A. We Must Work Hard at Persevering in Humble Service (:12)

1. The Example of Christ should be Sufficient Motivation

Pentecost:

"*Wherefore*" always introduces the logical application of a truth that has been presented = the example of Christ

"In total abandonment to the will of God for the good of those He loved, He gave up all the rights that He had as the eternal Son of God. He veiled His essential glory in human flesh, and He went to the cross, not for His own good but because He sought the good of those whom He loved."

"In Paul's mind, if his presence would put pressure upon them, the example of the loving suffering of the Lord Jesus Christ ought to put even greater pressure on them. It was Paul's greatest desire to please a person. That was the motive in his personal life, and it was not necessary for that Person to be present."

the extent of obedience should always be consistent since our accountability is not to men, but to God -- "*just as always you obeyed not as in my presence only but now much more in my absence*"

the degree of obedience of the child is not determined by what the child does when the parent is present, but by what he does when the parent is absent.

the Philippians did have a good track record in terms of obedience and Paul is quick to soften the impact of his exhortations with appropriate praise

2. Our Attitude must be that of a Humble Servant -- striving to please his master "*with fear and trembling*"
possibly an idiomatic expression of the times
1 Cor. 2:3; 2 Cor.7:15; Eph.6:5
cf. hostess wanting to make sure everything is just right for a distinguished guest

opposite of being high-minded and proud and arrogant and self-confident

3. The Responsibility for Persevering in Humble Service Rests on Each of Us -- "*keep working out the salvation of yourselves*"

not talking about works earning our salvation -- we know we are "saved by grace thru faith and that not of ourselves; it is the gift of God; not of works lest any man should boast"

lit. "to carry out to its intended goal, to carry to its ultimate conclusion; accomplish" -- speaking not of justification but of the path of sanctification that ultimately leads to glorification

they could not depend on the Apostle Paul or even on their elders for their own progress in Christlikeness -- in a life of humble service ("*your own*" is emphatic by position)

Why suffer for loving others? Christ did it and so should we
Don't give up when pressure or suffering come -- remember it has been granted to us not only to believe in Christ, but also to suffer for His sake

B. God Works Efficaciously to Make It Possible For Us to Persevere in Humble Service (:13)

Gives us hope and assurance

1. Graciously grants the DESIRE to live a life of humble service in harmony with God's good pleasure

2. Graciously grants the POWER to carry out that desire
word = "effective energy" -- only used of supernatural power
in the NT

Carson: "God's continuous, gracious, sovereign work in our lives becomes for us an incentive to press on with fear and trembling."

II. (:14-16) MAINTAIN A BLAMELESS TESTIMONY AS A CHILD OF GOD

Paul uses 6 different approaches to urge the Philippians to maintain a blameless testimony in harmony with their privileged calling and new nature as children of God

- A. Warning -- Do Not Spoil Your Humble Service (:14)
Danger lies in wait to ruin our testimony

"Do all things" -- everything that submitting to humbling yourself and serving others calls for

some people try to avoid temptation by sitting life out as a spectator; not taking the risks of Christian ministry.

Paul says "Get involved; Be aggressive in taking every oppty. for humble service"

But Do Not Spoil Your Humble Service

1. By Grumblings
Background = OT grumblings of children of Israel in the wilderness
2. By Arguments **Lenski:** evil rationalizing thoughts and calculations (Rom. 1:21; 1 Cor. 1:20)

Lenski: "not referring to quarrels that would disrupt unity among brothers; but grumbling at the disagreeable hardships of life and persecution"

Other commentators feel that the context of the epistle deals with quarrels among the brothers that destroy church unity

- B. Description -- of the Type of Children that Make a Father Proud --
The Character of a Blameless Testimony
 1. Blameless -- nothing people can censure you for
 2. Pure; innocent -- unmixed; unadulterated --
devoid of matters foreign or improper to a pure heart

3. Children of God -- ones who faithfully reflect the image and nature of their Father

this is where the emphasis lies

4. Without blemish; no flaws (cf. the absence of defects in sacrificial animals)

C. Reminder -- of the Evil Environment and Perverse Peer Pressure that Wage War Against a Blameless Testimony

"in the midst of a generation crooked and perverted"

D. Picture -- Be a Shining Star for Christ in the midst of such darkness; Be a lighthouse in your community with worldwide impact thru participation in the body of Christ

The Impact of a Blameless Testimony -- a Picture helps you to Visualize the successful implementation of the Biblical principle

it is possible for us not to be shining as brightly as we should because something is clouding or obscuring our testimony
How will the world ever see the light if the light does not shine brightly?

E. Focus -- The Source and Power of a Blameless Testimony

Source -- we need the content

Power -- we need the content in its efficacy

1st Option -- "*Holding fast the Word of Life*" in perseverance; this would fit as a grounds for Paul's boasting in the day of Christ

Other option -- "*holding forth the Word of life*" in evangelism; this would closely parallel what precedes

Both are true; you must continue to give attention to observing the Word of life yourself in order to be able to offer it to others

F. Personal Plea -- The Importance of Our Blameless Testimony to Our Spiritual Leaders -- Paul's own stake in this matter

Desire to see his ministry proved effective in the lives of others rather than futile;

Paul has invested a lot of hard work and sacrifice in their spiritual growth;
The true results will be manifest at the day of Christ

III. (:17-18) FELLOWSHIP IN JOY MUST ALWAYS DOMINATE OUR FELLOWSHIP IN SACRIFICIAL SERVICE AND SUFFERING

A. Fellowship in Sacrificial Service and Suffering Is Viewed as An Offering to God

OT background of drink offering

Springs from faith

Carson: "Then, if Paul has to give up his life, his sacrifice is merely a kind of libation poured out on top of their sacrifice. Such a libation is meaningless unless it is poured out on a more substantial sacrifice. But their Christian living is that sacrifice; Paul's martyrdom--should it occur--or the pains, sufferings, and persecutions he faces as an apostle are the complementary drink offering poured over theirs."

B. Fellowship in Joy Must Be the Dominating Tone

We must first be rejoicing ourselves

Then we must be rejoicing together

* * * * *

DEVOTIONAL QUESTIONS:

- 1) Is our level of obedience affected by who is around us, by whether or not someone is watching us? Or are we the same person in private as we are in church on Sunday morning? (cf. vs. 12)
- 2) The doctrine of God's sovereignty is often attacked as being a threat to our individual personhood. From verse 13 how is this doctrine actually a comfort and encouragement to us in our struggles to mature in Christ?
- 3) Why are "*grumbling and disputing*" viewed so negatively by God? What impact does such an attitude have on our Christian growth and our public testimony? Trace examples from the children of Israel wandering in the wilderness in the book of Numbers to see how severely God judged such transgression.
- 4) What gave the Apostle Paul great joy in the present and what did he anticipate

would give him great joy in the future? What is our joy centered around?

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QUOTES FOR REFLECTION:

Motyer: "...there is an obvious division between verses 12-16a (. . . *word of life*) which are full of *directives*, and verses 16b-18 which are concerned with *incentives*. But there is more to verses 12-16a than a list of commands; it is also a list of reassurances. There is a balance created between what we are to do and to strive to be and, on the other hand, what is already true of us.... This is the balance and testimony of the verses: the Christian life, growing in the likeness of Christ, is a blend of rest and activity -- not alternating from one to the other, but a blend in which, at one and the same moment, the Christian is both resting confidently (for example, on what God is doing within) and actively pursuing (for example, the duty of being blameless)... The work of the Christian carries the marks of obedience, responsibility and sensitivity... the indwelling of God bears the marks of activity, effectiveness, completeness and free divine choice."

Boice: "No one will ever understand the doctrine of God's working to form a man's will until he realizes that apart from the work of God in his heart through Jesus Christ a man does not have free will where spiritual realities are concerned. I know that someone will want to reply, 'What! Do you mean to tell me that I cannot do anything I want to?' But my answer is, 'Yes; you cannot.' Oh, I know that you have free will to decide certain things, but you do not have free will to decide all things. And you are most unable to decide the things that are important. For instance, you can decide whether you want to go to church on Sunday morning or stay at home. You can decide whether you will take the bus downtown or go by car. You can decide whether you will go to work on Monday morning or pretend you are sick. You can order turkey or roast beef at a restaurant. You can do these things. But you cannot exercise your free will in anything that involves your physical, intellectual, or spiritual capabilities. By your own free will you cannot decide that you are going to have a fifty percent higher I.Q. than you do or that you will have a gift for dealing with quantum mechanics. You just cannot do it. You do not have free will to become three inches taller. You do not have free will to make a billion dollars. You do not have free will to run the 100-yard dash in eight seconds. You do not have the free will to look like Burt Lancaster or Steve McQueen, or to look like Raquel Welch if you are a girl. You do not have free will in anything intellectual or physical.

Now just as you do not have free will intellectually and you do not have free will physically, so you do not have free will spiritually. You cannot choose God. Adam had free will, but he lost it. And all men since are without it until it is recreated in them by the Holy Spirit. Let me give you an illustration. It is as if a man were standing on the edge of a muddy pit with slippery sides. As long as he is on the edge he has free will; he can either stay on the bank or jump in. But if he decides to jump in, then his free will is lost as far as getting out of the pit is concerned. He lost his free will in the fall. Oh, he has free will to walk around on the bottom or to sit down. He has the free will to try to scramble up the side or to accept his plight philosophically. He has the

free will to cry for help or to be silent, to be angry or complacent. But he does not have free will to be again on the edge of the embankment...

If you have come to God, it is only because God has first entered your life by His Holy Spirit to quicken your will, to open your eyes to His truth, and to draw you irresistibly to Himself. It is only after this that you are able to choose the path which He sets before you."

Walvoord: quoting **F. B. Meyer**

"F. B. Meyer points out that this great text has six dominant notes: God's Personality -- *'it is God'*; God's Immanence -- *'in you'*; God's Energy -- *'worketh in you'*; God's Morality -- He works in you *'to will'*; God's Efficiency " He works in you *'to work'*; God's Ultimate Satisfaction -- *'for His own good pleasure.'*"

Carson: "So we are called not only to early steps of faith and obedience but to an entire life of working out our salvation. This will be characterized by (1) self-denying contentment, (2) a conscious effort to please mature Christian leaders, and (3) a cheerful sacrifice that ratifies and endorses the work that more mature Christian leaders have poured into our lives. And all of this is nothing more than learning the entailments of following a crucified Messiah. In short, we must adopt Jesus' death as a test of our outlook."

Bruce: "When a sacrifice, such as a burnt offering with its accompanying cereal offering, was presented in the temple at Jerusalem, a drink-offering or libation of wine or olive oil might be poured over it or beside it. This was added last, and completed the sacrifice."

Kent: "Regeneration initiates the believer into a life with obligations. Acknowledging Jesus Christ as Lord obligates the believer to obey him. Hence, working out salvation does not mean *'working for'* salvation, but making salvation operational. Justification must be followed by the experiential aspects of sanctification, by which the new life in Christ is consciously appropriated and demonstrated...

'With fear and trembling' is no contradiction of the joyful spirit permeating this letter. Christian joy is the experience of every believer in God's will, but holy fear of God that trembles at the thought of sin is also the attitude of the careful Christian (James 4:8-10)."

TEXT: Philippians 2:19-30

TITLE: PARTNERS IN THE GOSPEL

BIG IDEA:

TWO EXAMPLES OF PARTNERSHIP IN THE GOSPEL: UNSELFISH, SACRIFICIAL SERVICE TO OTHERS IN ORDER TO FURTHER THE GOSPEL

Carson: "Emulate those who are interested in the well-being of others, not in their own. Be on the alert for Christians who really do exemplify this basic Christian attitude, this habit of helpfulness. They are never the sort who strut their way into leadership with inflated estimates of their own importance. They are the kind who cheerfully pick up after other people. They are not offended if no one asks about them; they are too busy asking about others. They are the kind who are constantly seeking to do good spiritually, to do good materially, to do good emotionally. They are committed to the well-being of others."

I. (:19-24) THE EXAMPLE OF TIMOTHY -- A KINDRED SPIRIT

A. (:19-21) The Heart of an Undershepherd of Christ -- a Servant to the Flock

1. A Blessing to both Paul and the Philippians

a. faithful in his interaction

"But I hope in the Lord Jesus to send Timothy to you shortly"

b. encouraging in his outlook

"so that I also may be encouraged"

c. accurate in his assessment

"when I learn of your condition"

2. A Kindred Spirit to both Paul and Christ

a. unique in this regard

"For I have no one else of kindred spirit"

Gromacki: "The term *'like-minded'* (*isopsuchon*) literally means *'equal soul.'* Just as Jesus Christ was equal to the Father in deity (2:6), so Timothy was equal to Paul in the characteristics of unity, humility, and concern for others."

b. genuinely concerned for others

"who will genuinely be concerned for your welfare"

c. totally unselfish

"For they all seek after their own interests"

d. totally committed to Christ Jesus

"not those of Christ Jesus"

B. (:22) The Track Record of Faithful Service

1. Man of Proven Worth

- "But you know of his proven worth"*
2. True Partner in the Gospel
"that he served with me in the furtherance of the gospel"
 3. Like a Faithful Son
"like a child serving his father" 1 Cor. 4:17; 1 Tim. 1:2; 2 Tim. 1:2

MacArthur: "Model spiritual living demands that you come alongside those who are the fathers, the spiritual fathers and look at them with love and esteem and respect and honor as a little fellow does the father of his love. That alone could heal congregations of immense difficulties."

- C. (:23-24) The Availability to Meet Needs
 1. Willing to Serve wherever needed
"Therefore I hope to send him immediately, as soon as I see how things go with me"
 2. Patterned after the Model of the Apostle Paul Himself
"and I trust in the Lord that I myself also shall be coming shortly"

Barclay: "Timothy's great use was that, whenever Paul wished for information from some Church, or when he wished to send advice or counsel or encouragement or guidance or rebuke, and when he could not go himself, it was Timothy whom he sent..."

The great use of Timothy was that Timothy was a man who could be sent anywhere, and who was always willing to go. In the hands of Timothy a message was as safe as if Paul had delivered it himself. Others might be consumed with selfish ambition, and might be concerned with their own interests alone; but Timothy's one desire was to serve Paul and to serve Christ in Christ's Church. Timothy is the patron saint of all those who are quite content with the second place, so long as they can serve."

II. (:25-30) THE EXAMPLE OF EPAPHRODITUS -- A COURAGEOUS AND COMPASSIONATE MINISTER

- A. (:25) A Minister of Great Value (based on his companionship/partnership)
 1. To the Apostle Paul Himself
 - a. *"my brother"* -- Relationship
 - b. *"fellow worker"* -- Responsibility
 - c. *"fellow soldier"* -- Resolve

Barclay: "As Lightfoot puts it, **Epaphroditus** was one with Paul in sympathy, one with him in work, one with him in danger."

2. To the Philippian Believers
 - a. *"your messenger"*
 - b. *"minister to my my need"*

Barclay: "The word he uses for *servant* is the word *leitourgos*. In secular Greek this was a magnificent word. In the ancient days in the Greek cities there were men who, because they loved their city so much, out of their own resources and at their own expense undertook certain great civic duties. It might be to defray the expenses of an embassy, or the cost of putting on one of the great dramas of the great poets, or of training the athletes who would represent the city in the games, or of fitting out a warship and paying a crew to serve in the navy of the state. These were munificent gifts to the state; such men were the supreme benefactors of the state; and such men were known as *leitourgoi*."

B. (:26-27) A Minister of Great Compassion and Mutual Love (based on his companionship/partnership)

1. (:26) With respect to the Philippians

"because he was longing for you all and was distressed because you had heard that he was sick"

2. (:27) With respect to the Apostle Paul

"For indeed he was sick to the point of death, but God had mercy on him, and not on him only but also on me, lest I should have sorrow upon sorrow."

C. (:28-29a) A Minister of Great Joy (based on his companionship/partnership)

"Therefore I have sent him all the more eagerly in order that when you see him again you may rejoice and I may be less concerned about you. Therefore receive him in the Lord with all joy"

D. (:29b-30) A Minister of Great Courage and Dedication

"and hold men like him in high regard; because he came close to death for the work of Christ, risking his life to complete what was deficient in your service to me."

* * * * *

DEVOTIONAL QUESTIONS:

1) Have we truly offered ourselves as a *"living sacrifice"* to God? What types of acts of service have we carried out this past week?

2) Do we submit all of our plans (our travel plans, our business plans, our daily "to do" list) to the sovereign will of God, or do we just press forward in presumption, assuming that we are in control of our life?

3) Do we properly model servanthood and concern for the furtherance of the gospel to our children so that they would do well to emulate our example, serving with us *"in the furtherance of the gospel like a child serving his father"*?

4) Do we have concern for the spiritual condition of others to the extent that we will sacrifice everything to try to meet their needs and give them cause for rejoicing?

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QUOTES FOR REFLECTION:

Wiersbe: "Timothy had a natural concern for the welfare of others; he had a servant's mind. It is too bad that the believers in Rome (where Paul was) were so engrossed in themselves and their own internal wranglings (1:15-16) that they had no time for the important work of the Lord. This is one of the tragedies of church problems; they divert time, energy, and concern away from the things that matter most. Timothy was not interested in promoting any party or supporting any divisive cause. He was interested only in the spiritual condition of God's people, and this concern was natural to him."

Gromacki: "Epaphroditus was aware that the gift of the Philippians was not enough to meet the needs of the apostle; thus he worked to earn money. The more he worked, the weaker he grew. He tried to make up the difference (*'to supply'*) between the actual amount of the gift and the needed total. The *'lack'* was not created by a deliberate attempt to withhold funds, because the church was later applauded for its generosity (4:10-19). Just as Christ died as the sin substitute for the needs of all men, so Epaphroditus almost died as the financial substitute for the Philippians."

Boice: Re *"fellow-soldier"* -- "A shoulder-to-shoulder fighting accounted for the success of Rome's armies. Prior to the triumph of Rome, men fought mostly as individuals. They often dressed alike and were armed alike, but they did not fight side by side with each other. The Roman armies did, and as a result the phalanxes of the legions were the terror of the ancient world. The soldiers marched abreast behind a solid wall of shields. And as they marched they struck their shields with their spears in unison and sang their battle songs. In such a way we are to advance in harmony against the spiritual powers arrayed against us."

Gutzke: "We can see here the unselfishness of Paul. He was in prison, in one of the old pagan prisons. It was a situation where to be left alone would be multiplying a person's distress. The prisoner needed someone to help him, to bring him food and drink, and to take care of him. The people in Philippi had sent Epaphroditus to do this, and Epaphroditus had been doing it. When Epaphroditus heard that the people back home were unhappy and worried because they had heard he was sick, he wanted to go and tell them he was all right. When Paul considered it and thought about it, he felt that was the thing to do. He himself was in danger and in need. Yet he sends the man home. Why? Because they were worried. If ever anyone needed a boost, it would have been Paul. He was standing, as it were, in the very presence of death, yet he sends this young man home so the people there will be strengthened."

Bruce: "Paul did not set out deliberately to present three examples of the self-renouncing attitude *'that Christ Jesus had'* (v. 5). But in fact this is what he has done. His own readiness to have his martyrdom credited to the spiritual account of his Philippian friends, Timothy's unselfish service to Paul and genuine concern for other Christians, Epaphroditus's devotion to his mission at great risk to his health and (as it might have been) to his life--all these display the unselfconscious care for others enjoined at the beginning of this chapter and reinforced by the powerful example of Christ's self-emptying."

Martin: "*The care of all the churches'* was shared by both men (Paul and Timothy). There is no contradiction here with iv. 6. What is forbidden there is anxious care for one's self and one's own interests. Timothy's *'anxiety'* was for the spiritual welfare of others.

In Christian experience it is remarkable how often these apparent contradictions go together, but in reverse. We find ourselves guilty of anxiety over our own interests to the exclusion of others' well-being. One of the surest antidotes to personal 'care' is to widen our horizons and so enlarge our heart of sympathy that we share the burdens of other people."

Racer: The Bonds of Ministry – One-Souled Discipleship (2:19-24)

Rejoicing in Helpers is the overall theme of this section ...

Introd: Everybody loves a helper when it comes to work; of the critical need for co-laborers especially in the face of loss (like death or separation where the baton of responsibility needs to be picked up and carried on).

Timothy is charged with difficult tasks to accomplish; not just a gopher, carrying Paul's bags:

- working with a problem church – 1 Cor. 4:17 – correction needed
- working with a model church – 1 Thess 3:2 – encouragement needed in the face of suffering for the gospel

Everyone in the church needs to plug into this model of discipleship:

- associate with some more mature believers who can continue to mentor you
- take the initiative to seek out some younger believers that you can help disciple

Christ's strategy = choose people you can invest your life in and spend time with so that they will invest their lives in others

Racer: Risk Taking in Spiritual Ministry – (2:25-30)

Only a very few people enthusiastically embrace risks. Most of us choose security.

This passage deals with "Out of Round Risk Takers" – especially Epaphroditus here. "eccentric" = "out of round, wobbling" – these are the types of people that truly bring progress and make things happen.

I. Paul's Profile of Epaphroditus (vs 25)

- 3 descriptions of his connection to the Apostle Paul
 - brother / fellow-worker / fellow-soldier
- 2 descriptions of his connection to the Philippian believers
 - your messenger / your minister – serving as a priest

II. What Perils did Epaphroditus face?

- Emotional anguish and stress – wondering what the Philippians were thinking about him since he had been unable to communicate and explain his delay
 - Physical sickness to the point of death; prolonged illness; very intense
 - Burden of the church building work (2 Cor. 6:3ff)
- III. The Perception of Epaphroditus
- How did the Philippians view him
 - How did Epaphroditus view himself
- IV. The Praise Due to Epaphroditus
- Deserved a Hero's Welcome – maybe people had viewed him negatively since they had not heard any word of what was happening
 - Deserved to be Held in High Regard – often risk takers can be perceived as having a screw loose when really their intensity reflects their passion to serve the Lord

MacArthur: “Timothy – the single-minded sympathizer -- The single greatest tool of leadership is the power of an exemplary life ... we tend to be creatures led more by pattern than precept. We are much better at following a pattern and a model than we are trying to live out a concept or a precept or a principle ... Principles and precepts tell us our duty, that's all they can do. Example assures us that that duty is possible because somebody is fleshing it out. If there were no one that I could look to as the model of spiritual virtue, I think I would probably say it's impossible . . . And we need other than Jesus Christ because although Christ is the perfect model, He is not like we are, He is not battling sin and the flesh and failure and weakness. And so we need somebody who puts flesh on principles, who puts life into precepts that we can pattern our life after ... So we come with all of that to the last characteristic and it really sums it up. Here is a man who is similar to Paul, he's imitating him. He is sympathetic for others. He is single-mindedly consumed with the interests of Christ. He is seasoned by experience and trials. He is submissive by choice as a loving son is to the one who disciplines him. He is sacrificial so that his life is focused on one thing, advance the gospel in the hearts of the lost. And finally because of all of this, can we say he was, number seven, serviceable...serviceable.”

TEXT: PHILIPPIANS 3:1-7

TITLE: REJOICE IN THE LORD / PUT NO CONFIDENCE IN THE FLESH

BIG IDEA:

REJOICING IN CHRIST MEANS TURNING OUR BACK ON EVERYTHING THAT WOULD EXALT OUR FLESH

I. (:1) REMEMBER THE COMMAND

A. Point of Emphasis -- "*Finally, my brethren*"

Carson: "What Paul is doing is picking up the theme of rejoicing he introduced in 2:17-18."

Gromacki: "... designates an abrupt change in subject matter."

B. Point of the Command -- "*rejoice in the Lord*"

Start with the most basic of things; fundamental

Boice: "What is joy? Joy is a supernatural delight in God and God's goodness. And it is a very different thing from happiness... Happiness is circumstantial, but not joy. Joy is an inner quality of delight in God, or gladness, and it is meant to spring up within the Christian in a way totally unrelated to the adversities or circumstantial blessings of this life."

C. Point to Remember -- We need to be reminded

"To write the same things again is no trouble to me, and it is a safeguard for you."

2 Pet. 1:12; Acts 20:29-31

II. (:2) WATCH OUT FOR FLESH PROMOTERS = JOY STEALERS (CHARLATANS)

Racer: "Pernicious enemies of grace and truth"

probably 3 designations of the same troublesome group (Judaizers), rather than 3 different groups; unbelieving Jews; former colleagues of Paul

A. Their Character -- "*dogs*"

Paul turns the tables on the legalistic Jews who would have used this derogatory term (filthy scavengers roaming the streets) as one of contempt for the Gentiles.

Racer: Scoundrels; keep nipping at your heels; chased Paul from town to town

MacArthur: What is startling here is that Paul, a Jew, calls Jews dogs. That's turning the table. That is a serious statement. You wonder sometimes why Paul was not popular. That statement would not make him popular...not popular. He is saying, in effect,

beware of those people who self-righteously call other dogs but they're the dogs. They accuse others of shamelessly attacking the truth and they are shamelessly attacking the truth. Are dogs unclean and filthy? So are they. Are dogs snarling and howling and vicious? So are they. Are dogs dangerous and able to wound and even kill? So are they. Stay away from them. Stay away from those dangerous filthy snarling howling wild attacking false teachers who parade themselves as if they are the virtuous ones, but they are deadly, they are dangerous, they are dirty. And he's talking about people who are religious. He's talking about people who say we must obey the law of God.

B. Their Conduct -- "*evil workers*"

Racer: "They undermine grace; they undermine the experience of the gospel after salvation for others... Grace is meant to bring freedom to every area of our life in a way that does not lead to licentiousness on the other end of the spectrum... Diminishing the work of Christ in other people's lives... taking something that is good and distorting it."

Gromacki: "This warning describes their conduct. They were '*workers*' in that they aggressively promoted their beliefs. They were working for their own salvation, and they attempted to influence others to accept legalism as an additional requirement with faith as the grounds for divine acceptance. They were like the hypocritical Pharisees who travelled anywhere just to make one proselyte (Matt. 23:15).

C. Their Creed -- "*false circumcision*"

Racer: "Provided physical evidence that you have submitted to the gospel ... figuratively speaking: mutilating the freedom of the gospel, not meant to be about externalism anymore but about the heart and spiritual circumcision ... the heart should not remain hard and calloused but be repentant and broken

Gromacki: "The term '*concision*' (*katatomen*) refers to severe mutilation, a thorough cutting. This descriptive title must be seen in contrast to genuine circumcision (*peritome*) which is based upon the same verb stem. The Judaizers were literally cutting down (*kata*), whereas circumcision involved a cutting around (*peri*). Physical mutilations, practiced in pagan idolatry, were prohibited by God through Moses (Lev. 21:5; I Kings 18:28)."

III. (:3) REMEMBER WHO YOU ARE = CHRIST EXALTERS

A. "*the true circumcision*"

B. "*who worship in the Spirit of God*"

C. "*and glory in Christ Jesus*"

D. *"and put no confidence in the flesh"*

Bruce: "External ceremonies are henceforth irrelevant. Physical circumcision has been replaced by the circumcision of the heart which *'is the work of God's Spirit, not of the written Law'* (Rom. 2:29). The word rendered *external ceremonies* is literally translated *'flesh'* (Gk. *sarx*); Paul uses this word not only in its ordinary sense but also to denote unregenerate human nature and sometimes to include practically everything, apart from God, in which people mistakenly put their trust."

IV. (:4-6) EXPOSE THE FUTILITY OF CONFIDENCE IN THE FLESH

Paul is the best person to expose the futility of confidence in the flesh:
*"although I myself might have confidence even in the flesh.
If anyone else has a mind to put confidence in the flesh, I far more."*

A. Futility of Trusting in Religious Rites

"circumcised the eighth day"

B. Futility of Trusting in Religious Pedigree

"of the nation of Israel"

"of the tribe of Benjamin"

"a Hebrew of the Hebrews"

Wiersbe: "He was born into a pure Hebrew family and entered into a covenantal relationship when he was circumcised. He was not a proselyte, nor was he descended from Ishmael (Abraham's other son) or Esau (Isaac's other son). The Judaizers would understand Paul's reference to the tribe of Benjamin, because Benjamin and Joseph were Jacob's favorite sons. They were born to Rachel, Jacob's favorite wife. Israel's first king came from Benjamin, and this little tribe was faithful to David during the rebellion under Absalom. Paul's human heritage was something to be proud of! When measured by this standard, he passed with flying colors."

C. Futility of Trusting in Religious Knowledge (Orthodoxy)

"as to the Law, a Pharisee"

D. Futility of Trusting in Religious Zeal (Commitment)

"as to zeal, a persecutor of the church"

E. Summary / Final Verdict: Supreme Example of Legalistic Self-Righteousness

"as to the righteousness which is in the Law, found blameless"

Wiersbe: "Like most 'religious' people today, Paul had enough morality to keep him out of trouble, but not enough righteousness to get him into heaven! It was not bad things that kept Paul away from Jesus -- it was good things! He had to lose his 'religion' to find salvation."

V. (:7) FOCUS ON THE BOTTOM LINE = KNOWING CHRIST

This is an accounting perspective -- concerned with profits vs. losses

"But whatever things were gain to me, those things I have counted as loss for the sake of Christ."

Carson: "Here, then, Paul exposes his fundamental values. On one side stands everything the world has to offer, including the privileged world of learned and disciplined Judaism. On the other side stands Jesus Christ and *'the righteousness that comes from God and is by faith.'* Paul insists that there is no contest; Jesus and the righteousness from God that Jesus secures are incomparably better."

Wiersbe: "The key word in Philippians 3:1-11 is *count* (vv. 7-8, 13). In the Greek, two different words are used, but the basic idea is the same: to evaluate, to assess. 'The unexamined life is not worth living,' said Socrates. Yet, few people sit down to weigh seriously the values that control their decisions and directions. Many people today are the slaves of 'things,' and as a result do not experience real Christian joy."

* * * * *

DEVOTIONAL QUESTIONS:

- 1) Do Christians today receive enough teaching that warns them against the specific types of false teaching that are prevalent today? Apparently it is not sufficient just to present the positive aspects of the truth. Do we take well to reminders on the basics or are we always wanting to hear new things?
- 2) How would we write our own personal testimony (similar to the theme expressed here by the Apostle Paul) to verbalize what type of confidence in the flesh we could put forward? Who is there in our life that would encourage us to put confidence in our flesh?
- 3) Have we discovered the difference between happiness and joy? Has this fruit of the Spirit been growing in our lives? Does our countenance reflect the joy in our heart?
- 4) How aggressive are we in making our boast in the Lord? in glorying in Christ Jesus?

* * * * *

QUOTES FOR REFLECTION:

Carson: "For many conservative Jews, the sign of entrance into the covenant was circumcision. That is why circumcision was such a crucial issue for them. If Gentiles

had to become Jews before they became Christians, then they had to be circumcised before they became Christians. To put it the other way round: when Jews told Gentile Christians that they had to be circumcised before they could be real and proper Christians, they were saying, in effect, that Gentiles could not really enjoy the blessings of the gospel, the blessings of Christ Jesus, until they had undergone the rite of circumcision and solemnly pledged themselves to live under the ancient Jewish law. But Paul's point is that those who argue in this way do not really understand what the Old Testament Scriptures say about circumcision... The distinguishing feature of a Christian, of a new-covenant believer, is that he or she has undergone *'circumcision of the heart, by the Spirit, not by the written code'* (Rom. 2:29)."

Boice: "That is the work of God in a man's heart. Paul came to the point where he opened his ledger book. And after he had looked at all of the things that he had accumulated by inheritance and by his efforts, he reflected that these things had actually kept him from Christ. He then took the entire list and placed it where it belonged -- under the list of liabilities. He called it 'loss.' And under assets he wrote, 'Jesus Christ alone.'"

Bruce: "What Paul formerly regarded as achievement he now acknowledges to have been failure. What he would formerly have regarded as worthless and indeed pernicious he now recognizes to be the only achievement worth pursuing -- the personal knowledge of Jesus as Lord, sharing the experience of his death and resurrection."

Motyer: "The outward mark of the people of God is that they glory in Christ Jesus. If we give this word more vigorous translation the meaning will be plainer, *'boast about Christ Jesus'*. He is their joyous theme. The word indicates a buoyant satisfaction in him; they enthusiastically appreciate who he is and what he has done, and glorify him as alone worthy of all praise: the Lord Jesus Christ.

Thus God has reached down from heaven to take a people for himself. He has animated them by his Spirit, displayed before them the beauty and satisfactoriness of his Son and given them faith in him. But he has also shown them what they are in themselves, so that, alongside the experience of the life-giving Spirit and the truth of the atoning Son, they are aware that they totally lack any personal worth: they put no confidence in the flesh.

This is the negative counterpart of the preceding two great positives. If it is true that we are God's people only because the Spirit of God has quickened us from the dead, what ground is there for self-praise? If Jesus alone is worthy to be boasted of, what room is there for self-glory? If the energy of the flesh can only consign us more and more certainly to the wrath of God, of what use is self-reliance? Flesh sums up what a person is apart from the grace of Christ -- the human being as yet unchanged by God's regenerating and redeeming work."

Racer: Why is it so important to rejoice in the Lord? Because it is not a fleshly-produced response. If I am not rejoicing it's probably because I am walking in the flesh. The spiritual response of rejoicing can only be produced by the Spirit of God; promotes dependence upon God in our daily walk. The flesh keeps us from knowing

Christ. It does not produce anything that pleases God.

Legalism is a contagious quality – these Judaizers were unsaved legalists – pernicious enemies of grace and true faith. They tried to define spirituality for everyone else based on their external rules and then make everyone conform to their code. Grace is meant to bring freedom to every area of life in a way that does not bring licentiousness. Legalism rooted in deep-seated insecurity and impatience.

MacArthur: The Distinctive Qualities of the True Christian –

It is a clear and penetrating distinction between the false circumcision and the true circumcision, between those who profess to be the people of God and those who are the people of God. It is a distinction between those who are religious and those who are righteous. It is a distinction between those who have an outward mark that identifies them with God and those who have had an inward change. . .

Re Circumcision:

But how do we know man is a sinner at the base of his character? How do we know man is a sinner at the root of his existence? The answer, by what he creates. Whatever comes from the loins of man is wicked because man is wicked. So I say to you, nowhere then in the anatomy of a man or in the activity of a man is depravity more manifest than in the procreative act because it is at precisely that point which he demonstrates the depth of his sinfulness because he produces a sinner. And I would remind you that Jesus Christ had no human father because there was no human father who could produce a perfect person. The Spirit of God had to plant a perfect seed in Mary and bypass a human father.

Re True Mark of Genuine Believer:

The event in isolation from the life proves nothing. That is why I say it is no proof that a man is not a Christian because he can't point to an event, nor is it a proof that a man is a Christian because he had an event. And yet I tell you, the church is filled with people who are banking salvation on a past event...particularly do parents find themselves saying..."Well, I know my son or daughter is living an undisciplined life, a godless life, rejecting the Lord, rejecting the church but I remember when they received Christ at the age of so-and-so." That event doesn't mean anything...unless it was a real change. And if there was a real change, then you don't need to look at the event because you can see the change. And what do you look for? Do they worship God? Do they glory in Christ Jesus? Do they reject the flesh? See. You don't look at the event.

List of 5 things that are not necessarily proof of genuine conversion:

- No past event of a supposed conversion is a verifier of true salvation
- Living by a moral code
- knowledge of the truth
- religious activity...religious activity, going to church, being baptized, taking communion, or whatever, lighting candles, praying beads, doing religious pilgrimages, doing certain prayers
- service in the name of Christ

TEXT: PHILIPPIANS 3:8-11

TITLE: KNOWING CHRIST IN A TRANSFORMING WAY

BIG IDEA:

KNOWING CHRIST IN A TRANSFORMING WAY IS THE ONLY PURSUIT WORTHY OF ETERNITY

Gutzke: "It is tomorrow that gives special meaning to what I do today. Whatever I do today, it is tomorrow when I am going to reap the consequences."

Matt. 16:25-26

I. (:8-9) KNOWING CHRIST AS THE SOURCE OF RIGHTEOUSNESS TRANSFORMS US TO LIVE A LIFE OF FAITH

A. Lofty Goal -- Worthy of Eternity

1. Summary: *"the surpassing value of knowing Christ Jesus my Lord"*

2. Two Parts:

a. *"that I might gain Christ"*

b. *"and may be found in Him"*

Kent: "... probably has an eschatological aspect. Paul wants the divine scrutiny he will undergo at Christ's return to reveal unquestionably that he had been in vital spiritual union with Jesus Christ."

3. Ultimate Goal: Approved by God as one who has the Righteousness of Christ

a. Negatively -- *"not having a righteousness of my own derived from the Law"*

b. Positively -- *"but that which is through faith in Christ, the righteousness which comes from God on the basis of faith"*

MacArthur: A right relationship to God is not by works, it's by faith. Boy, that's the key to this whole passage. You say, "What is this faith?" Let me give you a definition, listen very carefully. Faith is best described this way, faith is the confident continuous confession of total dependence on and trust in Jesus Christ for the necessary requirements to enter God's Kingdom. Did you get that? Faith is the confident continuous confession of total dependence on and trust in Jesus Christ to provide the necessary requirements for entrance into God's eternal Kingdom. It's not just believing that Jesus lived and died. It's trusting in Him and depending on Him to meet the requirements in your behalf to give you entrance into God's Kingdom. It's the surrender of your life in trust to Him...to do what you can't do. It's saying I can't do it.

B. Heavy Cost

"I count all things to be loss"

"for whom I have suffered the loss of all things"

"and count them but rubbish"

Martin: "The intimate relationship with *Christ Jesus* into which Paul had been brought was not secured without a price. Answering the divine revelation of the Lord there went the forfeiture of his 'gains' and surrender of his pride on the part of the apostle."

Gromacki: "It cost the young Pharisee to become a Christian. He lost his status within Judaism, his reputation, and his opportunity for wealth and fame. He experienced ostracism, bodily harm, death threats, and property destruction (cf. Heb. 10:34). He may have forfeited his Jewish birthright and family inheritance."

II. (:10-11) KNOWING CHRIST AS THE SOURCE OF RESURRECTION POWER TRANSFORMS US TO LIVE A LIFE OF FELLOWSHIP WITH HIS SUFFERINGS AND HIS GLORY

A. Lofty Goal -- Worthy of Eternity

1. Summary: *"that I may know Him"*

2. Two Key Areas:

a. *"the power of His resurrection"*

b. *"the fellowship of His sufferings"*

MacArthur: You see, because I know Christ intimately, because I have the righteousness of Christ, I have available the dynamic spiritual energy that comes from Him. Like in Daniel 11:32 where the prophet says the people who know their God will display strength and take action. Paul says I take Christ because of the power. You know something? There's no power in the law. There's no power to overcome sin in my flesh. There's no real power for spiritual service in my flesh. There's no power for victory in my flesh. There's no power for witnessing in my flesh. He says I've been operating without power and now I see all the power in Christ. You say, "How do you see it?" In His resurrection.

Pounds: "This power happens only when you take God at His word and act on it by faith. When you begin to exercise your spiritual gifts God has given you the power begins to flow, but not before. You don't feel it. You didn't suddenly feel strong, capable and mighty. You feel weak, and Paul says God's power is made perfect in your weakness. If you feel weak, if you feel inadequate, this is the only requirement for God exercising the power of the resurrection in you. Many Christians keep waiting to feel power before they act. You don't feel power. You begin to reach out and act according

to the needs around you and suddenly you discover there is unusual power at work in and through you. God is at work. It is His resurrection power at work through you.”

3. Ultimate Goal

"in order that I may attain to the resurrection from the dead"

Bruce: "Experiencing the power of Christ's resurrection here and now was not a substitute for looking forward to the resurrection of the body, as some of Paul's Corinthian converts appear to have thought (1 Cor. 15:12). Christ's resurrection, the power of which was imparted to his people even in their present mortal life, involved the hope for those who died believing in him *'that God, who raised the Lord Jesus to life, will also raise us up with Jesus'* (2 Cor. 4:14)."

B. Heavy Cost -- *"being conformed to His death"*

Boice: "... the knowledge of Christ's sufferings comes at a very high price, the price of total obedience. Hence, Paul writes of *'being made conformable unto his death.'*

To understand this phrase we must go back to chapter two of the letter, where Paul speaks of Christ's obedience in death and holds it up as a pattern for all Christian conduct. He argues that Jesus was so careful to obey his Father that he laid aside His outward mantle of glory and took to Himself man's form and nature, enduring all the sufferings of this world, and that He even died as a man in obedience to His Father's will. The fellowship of Christ's sufferings is won at the price of such radical and total obedience."

* * * * *

DEVOTIONAL QUESTIONS:

- 1) Why do we still put so much value on things which the Lord judges to be *"rubbish"*? If we fail to renounce the world's accounting system, why are we surprised when we find ourselves in the category of the double-minded?
- 2) What are some Scripture passages that point to the type of experiential, relational *knowledge of Christ* that Paul refers to in this context?
- 3) Are we shrinking back from embracing the *"fellowship of His sufferings"* and being *"conformed to His death"*?
- 4) Is Paul expressing any type of uncertainty in verse 11? What is the *"resurrection from the dead"* to which he refers?

* * * * *

QUOTES FOR REFLECTION:

Gromacki: "Such total resignation to the will of God means *'being made conformable unto his death.'* It is saying to God: *'Not my will, but thine be done.'* Just as Christ was in the *'form'* (*morphe*) of God, so the believer should be *'conformed'* (*summorphoumenos*) to His death. The essence of the cross-death should be the goal of each Christian (cf. 2:8). The present tense of the participle indicates that this joint conformity should be a progressive daily drive in each life; thus Paul could say: *'I die daily'* (I Cor. 15:31). The passive voice of the participle shows that the Holy Spirit causes this transformation to occur."

Gutzke: "The natural human interest in any person would be to preserve himself. Someone will tell you that self-preservation is the first law of nature. There is no objection to that. It is the first law of nature, but do you realize that self-denial is the first step of the spiritual life. In the Spirit there will be self-denial. In nature, there is self-preservation. Paul wants to deny himself to death in order that Almighty God might raise him in Himself, in his daily experience, from the power of the flesh into the life of the Spirit by the grace of God."

Boice: "The accumulation of human righteousness is a bit like playing Monopoly. The game has beautiful money. The least valuable bills are the one-dollar bills; they are white. The most valuable are the five-hundred; they are gold. The object of the game is to collect as much money and property as you can. The game is enjoyable, but only a fool would take his Monopoly earnings and go into town to buy groceries. A different kind of currency is used in the real world. It is the same spiritually. And yet, although this is true, there are people who think they are collecting assets before God when they are only collecting human righteousness. And God tells us that we must leave the play currency to deal in His goodness. Man's goodness has no value in heaven."

Carson: Re vs. 11 -- "The word *'somehow'* in the original probably suggests that Paul is uncertain as to the timing and circumstances of this experience. Might it come to him in his lifetime, so that he receives a transformed, resurrection body without passing through death? From his first letter to the Thessalonians we learn that this is what Paul teaches will befall those believers who are alive when Jesus returns (1 Thess. 4:13-17). Or will he die and then rise from the dead? Either way, *'somehow,'* he will *'attain to the resurrectin from the dead.'* And in Paul's mind, attaining that glorious end, the final resurrection, the new heaven and the new earth, the home of righteousness, is bound up with persevering in the knowledge of Jesus Christ. So for knowledge of Christ Paul yearns."

MacArthur: The Surpassing Value of Knowing Christ –
What was Paul experiencing (at the point of conversion)? What was he feeling? Well he had always put all his confidence in his flesh, that phrase back in verses 3 and 4. He had always put all his confidence in his own human ability, his religion, his sincerity, his race, his tribe, his rank, his self-righteousness. And he had it all in the profit column, all in the asset column. And that's where all his confidence was for salvation. He believed that he was saved because of his religious privilege and his religious achievement. And

now all of a sudden he confronts Christ, the Spirit of God gives him understanding and he sees Christ for the first time as the true value, the real pearl, the treasure. And then he sees the loss that is in this column he once identified as assets and he's willing to throw the whole thing into one bag and trash it all and take Christ because Christ is of surpassing value. He made the right exchange. . .

May I note one other thing? He didn't say... "I had something good, this is better." He said, "This is loss, this is not asset, this is liability, that's not neutral, that's not good, that's negative, that's bad." Liabilities are bad. That's a loss not a profit. What do you mean by that? I mean to say that all of that stuff isn't good and Christ is better, all of that stuff is bad. You say, "Now wait a minute, is it bad to be circumcised the eighth day? Bad to be a Jew? Bad to be of the tribe of Benjamin? Bad to be a Hebrew of the Hebrews? Bad to be religious? Bad to be zealous?" Yes in this sense, if you count on that to save you...then it's bad. Why? Because it is so self-deceiving. You know the hardest person to reach in the world for Christ is the person who is religious. And the more religious they are and the more sincere they are and the more stuck in tradition they are and the more ceremonial they are, the harder they are to reach. Why? Because all their confidence is in that stuff and consequently they count on that for their salvation. Paul says that is not just good and this is better, that is bad. Why? Because religion damns the soul. False religion deceives the mind and damns the soul.

Goettsche: Paul tells us that he now "considers everything a loss compared to the surpassing greatness of knowing Christ Jesus my Lord." The word "consider" shows us that Paul has made a choice to refuse to rest or point to his actions as a reason for his salvation. He is constantly reminding himself that he is just an "old sinner saved by grace."

When we do this, several things happen. First, we are more prone to worship. When we get hung up on ritual and accomplishments we tend to worship our goodness rather than His. Second, we will know greater joy. We will know that we are accepted by God. We will no longer carry the burden of trying to save ourselves. And we will know the incredible freedom that comes from forgiveness. Third, we will be a better witness for the Lord. Instead of confusing people with our requirements, we will be pointing them to Jesus. Instead of trying to change people we will introduce them to the one who brings real change in a life. Instead of adding burdens to those seeking God we will remove the burdens.

TEXT: PHILIPPIANS 3:12-14

TITLE: PRESSING ON

BIG IDEA:

PRESSING TOWARD THE GOAL IS THE ONLY WAY TO RUN THE RACE OF CONFORMITY TO JESUS CHRIST

INTRODUCTION:

Walvoord: "On the one hand, discontent with one's spiritual life can bring discouragement and unnecessary resignation to spiritual defeat. On the other hand, in overestimating one's spiritual attainments, it is easy to become complacent with the measure of transformation which has taken place. Either alternative is falling short of the scriptural standard. What Paul is teaching in this section is that absolute perfection, such as exists in heaven, or attainment of spiritual victory which makes defeat impossible, is never achieved in this life. But there is the possibility of a high plateau of victory in Christ, of joy in the Spirit, and of the satisfaction of having served the Lord acceptably. It is this proper doctrine that the apostle is attempting to teach in this section."

I. THE GOAL IS CONFORMITY TO JESUS CHRIST

"in order that I may lay hold of that for which also I was laid hold of by Christ Jesus"

"the prize of the upward call of God in Christ Jesus"

THE MOTIVATION OF A LOFTY GOAL:

A. Salvation is Just a Starting Point

B. Christ Jesus Sets the Standard

Rom. 8:28-29 = the purpose for which we have been called by God

C. The Prize is Worthy of the Effort

II. IF YOU THINK YOU HAVE ALREADY "ARRIVED" YOU ARE OFF TARGET

"Not that I have already obtained it"

"or have already become perfect"

"Brethren, I do not regard myself as having laid hold of it yet"

THE DELUSION OF PERFECTION:

A. Some People Feel They Have Reached the Spiritual Mountaintop
He had not received yet all that God has for him.

B. Some People Feel They have Arrived

He had not been matured yet to the point where he was like Christ.

C. The Reality is That We All Have a Long Way to Go

III. LOOKING AT THE PAST WILL SLOW YOU DOWN

"forgetting what lies behind"

THE PITFALLS OF THE PAST:

- A. Weighed down by Sins/Failures of the Past (Heb. 12:1-2) / OR
Complacent because of Past Spiritual Success
(Past Positive Performance is no Indication of Future Success --
cf. the warning on commercials for mutual funds)
- B. Tainted by Bitterness and a Lack of Forgiveness / OR
Over confident because of the evidence of the Fruit of the Spirit
- C. Resigned to Powerlessness / OR
Distracted from continuing to Rely on the Lord

Bruce: "A competitor in a race does not look over his or her shoulder to see how much ground has been covered already or how rivals are getting on: the runner keeps eyes fixed on the winning post."
(cf. my experience in sixth grade relay race)

Boice: "What is the nature of the forgetting then? I believe that it is the kind of forgetting that occurs when we cease to let things that are in the past overshadow the present, that lets the past be past, both the good and the bad, and that constantly looks forward to the work that God still has for us."

IV. PRESSING TOWARD THE GOAL IS THE ONLY WAY TO RUN THE RACE

"I press on"

"but one thing I do... reaching forward to what lies ahead"

"I press on toward the goal"

THE CHALLENGE OF PERSEVERING IN MAKING PROGRESS:

- A. Requires a Perspective of Hope
- B. Requires a Work Ethic of Diligence
- C. Requires a Large Dose of Perseverance

DEVOTIONAL QUESTIONS:

- 1) Have you ever encountered someone who claimed sinless perfection? How do you think they would be able to respond to these verses?
- 2) How do these verses provide a healthy perspective of Christian ambition? We are warned against selfish ambition and looking out for number one, but often the problem is more one of complacency.
- 3) What are some things in your past that sometimes distract you from pressing forward in the Christian race? (could be either positive things leading to complacency or negative things leading to discouragement) How do you focus on the future and running the race God has set before you?
- 4) What is the *prize* Paul talks about in verse 14?

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QUOTES FOR REFLECTION:

Motyer: "To be '*perfect*' means to become increasingly like our Lord Jesus Christ, with his righteousness, not only as an inward, spiritual gift but as an outward way of life. His pattern of life is reproduced as we suffer even unto death which alone issues in a resurrection like his. In all this Paul has not yet '*arrived*' but was still on his way. Truly, knowing Christ has brought Paul to a very different self-estimate from that which his Pharisaic upbringing had inculcated (verse 6) -- and a more realistic and sobering one at that. He did not '*think of himself more highly than he ought to think*' and this lowly self-estimate was a springboard to progress."

Carson: "... Paul is not stagnating... If Paul knows that he is a model to be imitated, he also knows that he is a model in transition to greater glory. If he wants to be followed, he wants to be followed as he himself is still following hard after Jesus (1 Cor. 11:1). He is pressing on. He does not think of himself as having already been made perfect."

Wiersbe: "So '*forgetting those things which are behind*' does not suggest an impossible feat of mental and psychological gymnastics by which we try to erase the sins and mistakes of the past. It simply means that we break the power of the past by living for the future. We cannot change the past, but we can change the meaning of the past. There were things in Paul's past that could have been weights to hold him back (1 Tim. 1:12-17), but they became inspirations to speed him ahead. The events did not change, but his understanding of them changed."

Wiersbe: 5 Essentials to running the race in a way that wins the reward:

- Dissatisfaction -- "*Not as though I had already attained*"
- Devotion -- "*this one thing I do*"
- Direction -- "*forgetting the past*"

- Determination -- "*pressing forward*"
- Discipline -- vv. 15-16

Boice: "Someone once said to David Livingstone when he was back in England briefly after having worked for many years in Africa, 'Well, Dr. Livingstone, where are you ready to go now?' And Livingstone answered, 'I am ready to go anywhere, provided it be forward.'"

Kent: "Perhaps there were perfectionists in Phillipi who had resisted the Judaizers with their emphasis on works and ceremonies by going to the extreme of claiming to have acquired already the consummation of spiritual blessings. Paul understands clearly that he has a continuing responsibility to pursue the purposes Christ had chosen him for. Spiritual progress is ever the imperative Christians must follow."

TEXT: PHILIPPIANS 3:15-21

TITLE: STAYING ON TRACK

BIG IDEA:

FOLLOWING THE RIGHT EXAMPLES (THE WAY OF THE CROSS RATHER THAN THE WAY OF INDULGENCE) WILL KEEP US ON TRACK IN THE RACE TO GLORY TO JOIN OUR SAVIOR, THE LORD JESUS CHRIST

Gromacki: "In this section, the apostle challenged the believers to experience the joy of maturity."

I. (:15-16) BUILD ON THE PAST WHILE PRESSING ONWARD

A. Be Like-Minded in Your Perspective of Pressing Onward

"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;"

B. Be Careful to Continue to Build on the Foundation of Past Maturity

"however, let us keep living by that same standard to which we have attained."

We know what has been profitable in guiding us to our present level of maturity. It doesn't make sense to switch horses in the middle of the race. Dance with who brought you.

Carson: "We are not to leave old truths and prior steps of holiness behind, but as new truths and applications of old truths open up before our eyes, they should shape our knowledge and our living so powerfully that others see the improvement... So look around carefully, and emulate those who are continuing to grow spiritually, not those who are stagnating. Beware of those who project an image of smug self-satisfaction. Imitate those who keep on imitating Christ."

II. (:17-19) IMITATE ONLY THE RIGHT EXAMPLES

A. Right Example = Sacrificial Pattern of Life Demonstrated by the Apostle Paul (and His faithful co-workers)

"Brethren, join in following my example, and observe those who walk according to the pattern you have in us."

Quite a confident statement on Paul's behalf. He must have lived with a clear conscience before his Lord.

B. Wrong Example = Indulgent Pattern of Life Demonstrated by the "enemies of the cross of Christ"

1. Their Description

"For many walk, of whom I often told you, and now tell you even

weeping, that they are enemies of the cross of Christ"

2. Their Destiny -- "*whose end is destruction*"
3. Their Dependency -- "*whose god is their appetite*" -- they are addicted to the lusts of the flesh
4. Their Dishonor -- "*whose glory is in their shame*"
5. Their Delight
"who set their minds on earthly things"

III. (:20-21) FOCUS ON FUTURE GLORY

A. Future Glory Seen in Our Heavenly Citizenship

"For our citizenship is in heaven"

Gutzke: "For the believer heaven is his homeland. Although he lives in this world, he does not belong here. Scripture tells him he is here as a stranger and a pilgrim. He is journeying through this world to his eternal home."

B. Future Glory Seen in Our Coming Savior

"from which also we eagerly wait for a Savior, the Lord Jesus Christ"

C. Future Glory Seen in Our Resurrection Body

"who will transform the body of our humble state into conformity with the body of his glory, by the exertion of the power that He has even to subject all things to Himself."

Walvoord: "Our body needs to be changed by an act of God. This puts attaining perfection beyond the power of any Christian as long as he has his present body. Paul does not dwell here upon the sinfulness of the body, its mortality, or decay, but sums it all up as a body of humiliation suited for this life but not for glory."

DEVOTIONAL QUESTIONS:

- 1) How is it possible for Christians to put such an emphasis on being "*like-minded*" without a cultic methodology of brainwashing and coercion and restriction of independent thinking? How does God make plain additional truth to believers today who are not as mature as they should be in the areas in which Paul is discussing?
- 2) Who are some spiritual leaders in our own Christian pilgrimage that have proved to be examples worth imitating in various areas of the fruit of the Holy Spirit? Try picking each character trait (*love, joy, peace, etc.*) and identifying one special fellow

believer who has been a positive example to you in that area.

3) Who are some of the "enemies of the cross" in today's world? How do we recognize them as false teachers?

4) How much attention do we give to looking forward to that *blessed hope* -- the imminent return of our Lord Jesus Christ? How can we improve in this area and encourage one another?

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QUOTES FOR REFLECTION:

Gromacki: "These false preachers were in the ministry for what they could get out of it. Peter warned about elders who would take a pastorage for '*filthy lucre*' (I Peter 5:2). Paul likewise cautioned his readers about greedy ministers (I Tim. 6:3-10). Their belly became their god in that they served their worldly appetites (Rom. 16:18).

One reason why Paul surrendered his right to be supported financially by his converts was to avoid the suspicion that he was only interested in their money (I Cor. 9:1-18). In order to show that salvation was a divine gift, he offered his apostolic services at no charge. Unfortunately, his critics turned this gracious gesture into an argument against his apostleship (II Cor. 11:7-9; 12:13). They claimed that God financially prospered all successful preachers (I Tim. 6:5). This assertion is ridiculous in that Christ Himself experienced no material rewards in this life."

Barclay: "Philippi was a Roman colony. These Roman colonies were amazing places. Here and there at strategic military centres the Romans set down their colonies. They were not like modern colonies out in the unexplored wilds; they commanded great road centres, and passes across the hills, and routes by which the armies must march. In such places the Romans set down colonies, whose citizens were mostly soldiers who had served their time -- twenty-one years -- and who had been rewarded with full citizenship. Now the great characteristic of these Roman colonies was that, wherever they were, they remained fragments of Rome. No matter where they were, Roman dress was worn; Roman magistrates governed them; the Latin tongue was spoken; Roman justice was administered; Roman morals were observed. Even in the ends of the earth these colonies remained unshakably and unalterably Roman. So Paul says to the Philippians, 'Just as the Roman colonists never forget that they belong to Rome, you must never forget that you are citizens of heaven; and your conduct must match your citizenship.' Wherever the Christian is, his conduct must prove that he is a citizen of the Kingdom of Heaven."

Boice: "In the early days of the Christian Church the doctrine of the last things had three great points of focus: the return of Jesus Christ, the resurrection of the body, and the final judgment. And of the three the most significant was Jesus Christ's return. This was the blessed hope of Christians. For this they prayed. And with this thought they comforted one another in the face of sorrow, persecutions, death, and martyrdom."

The expectation of the Lord's personal and imminent return gave joy and power to the early Christians and to the Christian communities...

Unfortunately, in our day belief in the second coming of Jesus Christ has faded into a remote and sometimes irrelevant doctrine in many large segments of the Christian Church. And it is entirely possible that our present lack of courage and lack of joy flow from this attitude."

Motyer: "The first point at which they are spiritually degenerating is their *devotion to self-indulgence*. Their appetites and emotions have ceased to be subject to them and have been accorded the place of lordship and worship. They are governed by self-pleasing in bodily matters. Paul does not elaborate. He does not call them fornicators or drug-addicts or particularize their pet sensualities. If he did so we might stand aloof from the warning, if it did not happen to apply to us. The warning is not against particular sins, but against the underlying sin of pandering to self...

Paul's second observation as he diagnoses spiritual degeneration is their reversal of moral standards: *they glory in their shame*. In other words, they exalt things and practices which they ought to be ashamed of but are not.... There is no dwelling upon this or that reversal of moral values, but upon the thing itself...

In the final diagnosis the root of the trouble is discovered in their cultivation of an earthly mind: *their minds are set on earthly things*. At the very centre of their being, where their life finds its direction, where attitudes and tendencies are fashioned which subsequently influence decisions and govern likes and dislikes -- at this vital centre the world and its ways are the whole object of attention. The mind is set upon earth...

To continue in sin as if he had never died, to value sinful practices as if he had not exposed and discredited them, to live within earthly horizons as if the Son of God had not opened before our eyes a vision of heaven, and to remain bound by the trammels of the old life when he has achieved new life for sinners -- is not this to oppose all that the cross means? Is it not enmity?"

TEXT: PHILIPPIANS 4:1-9

TITLE: SHALOM: HOW TO EXPERIENCE PEACE

BIG IDEA:
4 PRESCRIPTIONS FOR PEACE

SHALOM – describes the deep sense of peace and well-being; much more than absence of conflict

Scripture Reading: Philippians 4:1-9

As we read, look for emphasis on phrase “*in the Lord*” – think of that in terms of in union with the Lord ... just like He is the vine and we are the branches; just as His very life flows through us and we do everything in total dependence upon Him

We are going to be looking at a supernatural way in which to live our lives ... no possibility apart from this simple phrase of “*in the Lord*” – don’t want you to leave frustrated or discouraged ... what we are talking about is totally unrealistic and unattainable apart from being plugged into the Lord’s grace and power and mindset and purposes

INTRODUCTION

It always fascinates me how when you preach through a book study on successive Sundays ... somehow you providentially hit upon just the right message for just the right date ... but without all the agony and effort of trying to figure it out on your own. We were blessed last week to hear Pastor Charles Hoblitz share of his experiences in St. Petersburg Russia. Do you remember the Biblical message that he had planned to bring before switching gears and just sharing some of his experiences? He was going to preach on How to Experience Peace in 2003 ... I wouldn’t be surprised if the text he had in mind was the very one we have arrived at this morning. I don’t know about you ... but I sure was glad he chose to give us some insight into how the Lord has used his ministry over in Russia. What an incredible ministry ... all of this work accomplished since 1993! And we have the privilege of being his partners in ministry.

That is what the message of Philippians is all about:

THE PURSUIT OF THE PERSON OF CHRIST AND HIS POWER PRODUCES A HUMILITY AND UNITY THAT BRINGS GREAT JOY

Need to test ourselves ... any increase in our passion for pursuing the Person of Christ and His Power? Any deepening Humility? Any stronger bonds of Unity? Any Increase in our Joy? – that’s what we are shooting for

This morning we have arrived at the theme of Peace – how appropriate for a New Year’s message that can set the tone for how we live in 2003.

Peace has always been popular ... but rarely understood or actively pursued.

How about those annoying bumper stickers: “I’m in favor of World Peace” – what do you think that means .. Do those people even have a clue??

Or how about those interviews in those stereotyped beauty pageants: What is your goal in life asks the inquiring judge? The contestant responds back: “I want to do all I can to promote world peace” – what does that mean??

I find it interesting that people want to jump all the way to the macro level of World Peace without having any insight into personal peace in their own lives ... and what God’s prescription is to experience that type of peace

HOW TO EXPERIENCE PEACE IN 2003 – 4 PRESCRIPTIONS FOR PEACE

Wouldn’t it be great if we could go to our doctor and explain our symptoms of fear, of anxiety, of stress, of broken relationships ... and he could just prescribe a little Peace Pill

Like the IBM series of commercials – What your network needs is this magical universal integrator adaptor that will solve all your I/S problems ...

Problem: Such a solution doesn’t exist

Certainly Peace should be an important goal for all of us

Dads – What kind of a job are you doing to promote a peaceful household;

How do you handle the pressures of work, of finances

Moms – do you find anxiety and stress to be a recurring problem

Maybe there are physical problems or uncertainty contributing to stress

Kids – do you like it when Mom is all stressed out??

The Apostle Paul had concerns about the stress level, the anxiety potential facing the believers at Philippi ... they had external pressures from the Judaizers and enemies of the cross of Christ; they had internal pressures from potential divisiveness over individuals who were having a hard time getting along in the church

How can any church be effective in fulfilling its mission to reach out to the lost when they can’t even get along with one another?

So Paul starts off in vs.1-3 with his **first Prescription for Peace**

I. (:1-3) HOW TO EXPERIENCE PEACE IN OUR PERSONAL RELATIONSHIPS IN THE CHURCH

Not talking about philosophical differences in church strategy and mission;

Doesn’t seem to be talking about doctrinal issues ... although many of the same principles will apply (otherwise Paul would apply the truth)

talking about 2 believers who are having trouble getting along with one another

Maybe they can’t even stand one another ...

(**MacArthur**: “We’re not talking about doctrinal error here, we’re talking about two women who couldn’t get along with each other, had picked sides, caused a conflict and lined up people on both sides against each other. They were prominent women and they were obviously beloved women who were having an impact.”)

Be thinking about how you get along with every other person here ... Maybe there is someone that really rubs you the wrong way ... If it's me then I beg you to especially listen very closely!

What's the Solution?

**REQUIRES OUR TOTAL COMMITMENT TO STICK TOGETHER IN THE LORD
AS WE STRIVE TOGETHER FOR THE FAITH OF THE GOSPEL**

Kent: "This verse is another of Paul's subtle transitions, so skillfully blended as to make it difficult to decide whether it should be placed with what precedes or what follows. A good transition, however, fits both segments."

A. Encouragement to Stand Firm in the Lord

Barclay: "The word which Paul uses for *stand fast* (*stekete*) is the word which would be used for a soldier standing fast in the shock of battle, with the enemy surging down upon him."

1) Based on our common pursuit

pressing forward together to know Christ

do we have a passion for knowing Christ or more

interested in our own goals and agenda

"Therefore" – looking back to end of Chap 3

are we truly living for eternity??

are we living like citizens of heaven??

If we allow other pursuits to distract us we will no longer be plowing the same field together

2) Based on our Preciousness (to the Apostle Paul and hopefully to one another) – expressions of intimacy

"beloved brethren" – closer than unsaved blood relatives; we actually have more in common = eternity!

"whom I long to see" – vs. can't stand to spend time with you know who that is in your life

"my joy and crown" – cf. 1 Thess. 2:19 "For who is our hope or joy or crown of exultation? Is it not even you, in the presence of our Lord Jesus at His coming?" Paul did not want to see his reward compromised

How Precious are the fellow believers to you ...

Motyer: "We have a long way to go before we are feeling the emotions of Christ towards each other as Paul was -- we who so easily dismiss from our reckoning those whom God has accepted and reconciled, and who so lightly offend those for whom

Christ died. If we felt for each other as Paul did, we should soon recognize the scandal of division."

Some people just have a great big heart ... said to say that has not been one of my strengths ... I need to pray "*God, enlarge my heart*" ... for a lot of reasons

I think of 2 people (You need to think of your own examples)

- **Dr. Fullerton** – aged man that led our college fellowship at Princeton
"Dear children" .. "beloved children" -- he could say that with a full heart

- a missionary I come back to in my thinking a lot ... you may have heard me make reference to him ... I wish we could have him visit one day and present the incredible way God has used him ... **Abraham Thomas** – just had that smile that made you warm all over and that pastoral heart where you knew that he valued you as one of his own dear children

B) Exhortation to Live in Harmony in the Lord

Think of how they used to fight when hand-to-hand combat was the main tactic. They would form ranks and try to stand firm and not be driven back by the attacks of the enemy. It would only take one weak spot for the attackers to break through and compromise your position.

"I urge Euodia"

How do you think these genuine believers felt when names read in public? What a legacy to leave for the future

"I urge Syntyche"

"to live in harmony in the Lord" – what a mouthful ... saying a lot there

Mindset of Christ is what is most important – Phil. 2

What was the source or nature of their conflict?? Paul deliberately does not tell us
Key = letting their personal rights get in the way of that path of humility and love that would prove most productive for *striving together for the faith of the gospel*

C) Plea for Assistance – from mysterious "*true comrade*" could be Luke whom Paul left in Philippi? Timothy?? Proper name?? Unknown??

"Indeed, true comrade, I ask you also to help these women who have shared my struggle"

Importance of the **role of women** in the progress of the gospel

- in Paul's day

- in our day

Think of how often the Apostle Paul is criticized for what God spoke thru him about the differing roles of men and women in the church make no mistake: the apostle Paul elevated the position of women and treated them as equals and co-

laborers with himself in the gospel ... this passage is probably the best proof text for that

Importance of Role of Peacemaker – blessed be the peacemakers .. Sermon on the Mount

Ministry of reconciling believers to one another – 2 Cor. 5:18-21 Excellent here ... read in context ... speaking of reconciling believers to believers

How receptive are we to help that is offered by others?? We tend to want to assert our independence ... to claim that nothing is wrong ... that we can handle it ... what is our first reaction when someone offers to help us???

D) Final Encouragement

1) Based on our history of partnership in the gospel

- Think of the comradeship of sports teams ..

the greater the degree of suffering and discipline ... the more you value that comradeship

- cf. how it is with those who have fought together in a war – common cause, common danger;

2) Based on our common and guaranteed final destination

“whose names are in the book of life”

(Rev 3:5; 17:8; 20:12, 15; 21:27; 22:19; Luke 10:20; Heb. 12:23)

What a tremendous promise and anchor for our souls ... we should never be embarrassed by the doctrine of God's sovereignty with respect to our salvation; about the eternal security we enjoy because God has elected us before we were conceived and written our names in the precious **book of life** before the foundation of the world

Do you think everyone's names are written in the book of life??

Do you think we can remove our names once God has written them there?

We are going to be living together in heaven for all eternity ...let's start living together right now

Walvoord: "A common faith in Christ and a common desire to serve Him do not necessarily adjust personal differences and do not always unite everyone in a course of action. The road to smoothing out these differences is found when Christians achieve *'the same mind in the Lord.'* When this is realized, differences in minor details of doctrine and in practical matters can be adjusted. But too often human pride, the stubbornness of the flesh, and personal ambition for prominence get in the way. Paul's exhortation emphasizes that Christians who are really yielded to the Lord should be able to resolve their differences. Even though they may not all be of precisely the same opinion, they should be able to find a meeting place in the mind of the Lord."

II. (:4-5) HOW TO EXPERIENCE PEACE IN ALL OUR RELATIONSHIPS

A. PREREQUISITE -- REQUIRES OUR TOTAL COMMITMENT TO ALWAYS REJOICE IN THE LORD – must have this fundamental tone to your life or you will be thrown off course by:

- outward circumstances
- how others treat you

“*Rejoice in the Lord always; again I will say, rejoice!*” another great transition verse ... goes with both sections

Do you know some believers that remind you of prunes or lemons?? all shriveled up with negativism and gloom and doom;

Buy not enough to have “The Power of Positive Thinking”

not talking just about taking a Dale Carnegie class here although I have taken my share for work and find a lot of principles borrowed from the pages of Scripture

but it does you no good to borrow **the principles** if you don't tap into **the power!!!**

God did not design us to live on an emotional roller coaster with extreme highs and lows depending on our circumstances and how others treat us

He designed for us to recognize our supreme role as His creatures = that of offering up praise and rejoicing for His name sake for Who He is = The Alpha and Omega who never changes; and what He has done, is doing and will do for us

Worship – that is what we have been called to devote ourselves to

God seeks those who will worship Him in spirit and in truth

this spirit of rejoicing requires a commitment on the part of our will; we don't always just wake up and feel like doing it

Presbyterian inhibited upbringing – we aren't good at outwardly expressing the emotional side of this rejoicing – hurts us – because rejoicing has a snowballing cyclical effect just like depression does

Look at how easy I find it is to emotionally express myself while watching a Ravens game ... amazing phenomena ... over something so empty of eternal significance

Different cultures vary greatly in their capacity here

Kent: One might ask: How can we rejoice in view of our difficulties?

“So he repeats the command, because in all the vicissitudes of the Christian life, whether in attacks from erorists, personality clashes among believers, persecution from the world, or threat of imminent death—all of which Paul himself was experiencing at this very time – the Christian is to maintain a spirit of joy in the Lord. He is not immune to sorrow nor should he be insensitive to the troubles of others; yet he should

count the will of God his highest joy and so be capable of knowing inner peace and joy in every circumstance.”

B. GRACIOUSNESS -- REQUIRES OUR TOTAL COMMITMENT TO PUT UP WITH A LOT

“Let your forbearing spirit be known to all men. The Lord is near.”

Greek word can be translated:

"fairmindedness"
"gentleness"
"readiness to forgive"
"graciousness"
"sweet reasonableness"

we can't pick or choose those people that we are going to put up with ...

Isn't it curious how the Lord gives us close relatives that really test us in this area

Need to overlook irritations; not be overly sensitive; don't make people walk on pins and needles when around you

such conduct has value in terms of giving us peaceful relationships with others

such conduct has value in terms of giving us a good testimony before others

Zeisler: “Now if you want to check whether or not you are a gentle, forbearing person, see if your forbearance works with everybody, not just certain people. Anybody can be gentle with nice people, but the Word of God to us is to "let your forbearing spirit be known to all"-- everybody, hard people, intimidating people, pushy people. That is how to check whether or not we are really trusting in the nearness and the strength of Christ. This gentleness is also part of the peace we have with God. Harmony between brothers and sisters in the family of God, joy in everything, and gentleness as we face all the things the world throws at us are all evident in people who receive God's peace.”

Gromacki: "The term '*moderation*' (*epieikes*) means gentleness, reasonableness, magnanimity, forbearance, good will, and a friendly disposition. A magnanimous person bears trouble calmly and rejects revengeful meanness."

C. ACCOUNTABILITY -- REQUIRES OUR CONSCIOUSNESS OF THE NEARNESS OF THE LORD

- Possibly: His presence close to us now ??
 - provides comfort and encouragement and the patience and perseverance we need
 - omnipresence: watching how we are conducting ourselves right now
- More likely eschatological sense: His soon return?? – cf. 3:20-21 Parousia trials are just for a short time; almost over

final accountability before the judge

James 5:7-9 – parallel passage

Paul not asking them to do the impossible. Patience is possible because the return of the Lord is at hand

III. (:6-7) HOW TO EXPERIENCE PEACE IN OUR HEART

A. (:6a) Formula for Certain Defeat = Giving in to Anxiety

“Be anxious for nothing”

Greek word = “to be pulled in different directions” – our hopes pull us in one direction and our fears in another and we are pulled apart

We excuse ourselves: I just can’t help it ... it is a Panic Attack I’m defeated before I even had a chance to put up a struggle ... Overlooking the importance of preparation ... look at how important **prayer** is as the safeguard to protect us before the temptation of fear or anxiety strikes

(Don’t view the Starting Point of the conflict as that moment when you first sense the temptation and the pressure to worry or fear; the Starting Point is that quiet time where you do the necessary preparation of prayer and praise before the Lord)

Cf. **Performance Anxiety** – Humility is the key here ... why do we respond one way before a certain type of person and another way before someone we view as very important?? Remember we are living in the presence of God ... that’s the only one we need to please ...

B. (:6b) Formula for Certain Victory = Life of Inner Peace

1. Transfer of Responsibility = Cast all your cares upon God

“let your requests be made known to God”

Key point: we want to pray to God for help while still holding on to the responsibility of trying to control all things – not possible!

Isn’t it nice we have a father who is approachable ... who wants to give us good things

...

2. Tools

a. *“by prayer”* – instead of worrying; emphasis on worship and devotion

b. *“and supplication”* crying out for your personal needs; pleading the promises of God

3. Tone = *“with thanksgiving”*

Have we misplaced the tone of thanksgiving and rejoicing which Paul continually stresses as essential for effective living and praying?

C. (:7) Assurance of Victory When We Depend on the Amazing Resources of God

1. Key Resource here = *“the peace of God”*

2. Supernatural Quality and Quantity of God's Amazing Resources
"which surpasses all comprehension" (Eph. 3:20)

3. Active nature of God's Peace

"shall guard your hearts and your minds in Christ Jesus"

military metaphor; The Philippians, living in a garrison town, would be familiar with the sight of the Roman sentry, maintaining his watch."

IV. (:8-9) ALL PEACE ULTIMATELY DERIVES FROM THE GOD OF PEACE

But that doesn't mean we can just sit back and wait for God to make it happen
Very similar to Pastor Brian's earlier message – talking about that balance between the sovereignty of God and man's responsibility

2 KEYS TO TAPPING INTO GOD'S GRACE AND FAVOR

A. (:8) THINKING RIGHT

Satan wages a constant battle for control of our minds

Lots of enemies and temptations that would prevent us from Thinking Right

- Internet temptations – I think I'll just pull up one picture of this particular actress; just curious
- TV – using that channel switcher to just linger on that one station a split second too long
- no place for gossip or giving a bad report of someone
- no place for putting others down

1. Appropriate Food for Thought

- "*whatever is true*" valid, reliable, honest opposite of false
- "*whatever is honorable*" – noble, worthy of respect – cf. elders
- "*whatever is right*" – upright or just; conformable to God's standards
- "*whatever is pure*" – moral purity
- "*whatever is lovely*" – pleasing, agreeable, amiable
- "*whatever is of good repute*" -- admirable

What have you been munching on lately?

2 Cor. 10:5 "*taking every thought captive to the obedience of Christ*"

2. Highest Possible Standard

"if there is any excellence"
"and if anything worthy of praise"

3. Active Focus = "*let your mind dwell on these things*"

Motyer: "The verb *think about* (*logizomai*) means to ponder, to give proper weight and value to, and to allow the resultant appraisal to influence the way life is to be lived."

B. (:9) ACTING RIGHT

1. Actions Worth Imitating

"the things you have learned and received and heard and seen in me"

Martin: "Before the composition of the New Testament and its acceptance as authoritative Scripture, 'the tradition,' as a standard of Christian belief and behaviour, was embodied in the teaching and example of those persons in whose lives the authority and ethical practice of the Lord was to be found. Paul refers to such 'traditions' (or 'commands' or 'ordinances') in a number of places (cf. 1 Cor. xi. 2, xv. 1 ff.; Gal. i. 9; Col. ii. 6; 1 Thes. iv. 1,2; 2 Thes. ii. 15). Before they were committed to writing and later formed the corpus of New Testament Scripture they were *learned, received, heard, seen* in the person of the apostles."

2. Practice Makes Perfect (but only when you are practicing the right things)

"practice these things"

Pentecost: "Maturity in the Christian life is not measured by what a man knows but by what he does. Let that be indelibly impressed upon your mind. Hebrews 5:12-14 gives us God's definition of maturity. Maturity is the ability to use the Word so as to determine the course of one's conduct."

Barclay: "To Paul, God is the *God of peace*. This, in fact, is his favorite title for God (Romans 16:20; I Corinthians 14:3; I Thessalonians 5:23). To a Jew peace was never merely a negative thing; it was never merely the absence of trouble; peace was everything which makes for a man's highest good. Only in the friendship of God can a man find life as life was meant to be. But also to a Jew this peace issued specially in right relationships. It is only by the grace of God that we can enter into a right relationship with God and with our fellow men. The God of peace is the God who is able to make life what it was meant to be by enabling us to enter into fellowship with himself and fellowship with our fellow men."

CONCLUSION: We have just come thru another Christmas season – remembering the babe born in the manger – The Prince of Peace -- The Lord Jesus truly came to bring Peace on Earth and good will to men. There is no need to wait for the millennium to start experiencing that peace in the spiritual and emotional realm right now.

* * * * *

DEVOTIONAL QUESTIONS:

1) What contribution does this passage make to the discussion of the role of women in

the church and in various forms of ministry? What questions does the passage raise?

2) How does the depth of our emotional affinity, the level of our intimacy of love and concern for our fellow believers compare to how Paul regarded the believers at Philippi? How will such love help to resolve disagreements and problems with dissension in the church? (cf. movie title -- *Terms of Endearment* -- how many such terms can you find in verse 1?)

3) What types of circumstances or people tend to make us anxious? How much do we struggle with worry in our life? How can we be more effective in our prayers in this regard? What are some of our personal barriers to peace that we need the power of God to overcome?

4) Have we misplaced the tone of rejoicing and thanksgiving which Paul continually stresses as essential for effective living and praying? Are we too busy to spend time praising the Lord and reflecting on His character (His goodness, wisdom, power ...) and His deeds on our behalf?

5) If we ran our choice of television shows, movies, and books through the grid of this criteria for right thinking, would we need to make some changes in what we are allowing to fill our mind? Are we willing to make those changes? Do we really believe that there is a direct connection to God's favor?

6) How does the fact that God knows our every thought impact our daily living? Are we only focused on those things that are clearly marked by *excellence* and *worthy of praise*? Do we realize that Satan is conducting a war to try to make inroads into our thinking?

7) Do we have some good role models to emulate? Are we digging into the Scriptures to recover the model of the apostolic life with the goal towards imitating it? Do we place a greater value on practicing the truth than on knowing the truth?

8) When have we experienced in a special way "*the God of peace*" being with us to show us His favor and protect us?

* * * * *

QUOTES FOR REFLECTION:

Bruce: "Who is singled out as Paul's *faithful partner*, or '*true yokefellow*'? Plainly it was someone whom it was not necessary to name: everyone, including the person so addressed, would know who was intended.

One very attractive suggestion is that Luke was the person so addressed. If Luke was the author of Acts, or at any rate of the '*we*' narrative, it can be inferred that he was in Philippi for part or most of the time between the first evangelization of the city and Paul's brief visit to it before setting out on his last journey to Jerusalem (cf. Acts 16:17

with 20:5). If, then, this part of the letter falls within that period (as its affinities with 2 Corinthians might suggest), Luke might well be the *faithful partner*. Otherwise, the partner's identity must be a matter of even more random speculation."

Mounce: "Syzgos is best understood as a proper name taken by some convert at baptism."

Walvoord: " In the opening verses of chapter 4, the digression from is concluding remarks which began in 3:1 is brought to an end and he resumes the exhortation to rejoice in verse 4, first introduced in 3:1. In the digression he had poured out his heart in warning his beloved brethren in Philippi against Judaistic teachers and against confidence in the flesh, and had extolled the superiority of righteousness by faith, the resurrection power of Jesus Christ, and the need for experiencing spiritual maturity. Now the climax to this exhortation is presented and again Paul declares his love for the Philippians.

Gathering in all the preceding exhortation and the reminder of glory ahead in the word *therefore* ... "

Martin: Re vs. 7 -- "Paul uses a military metaphor in describing the activity of God's peace, which is almost personified. *Shall keep, phrouresei*, is better expressed in the military language of '*shall keep guard over*' (cf. 2 Cor. xi. 32 for the verb in this sense). The Philippians, living in a garrison town, would be familiar with the sight of the Roman sentry, maintaining his watch. Likewise, comments the apostle, God's peace will garrison and protect *your hearts and minds*. Bunyan's use of this picture in the appointment and patrol of Mr. God's-Peace in the town of Mansoul should be read in conjunction with this verse. 'Nothing was to be found but harmony, happiness, joy and health' so long as Mr. God's-Peace maintained his office. But when Prince Emmanuel was grieved away from the town, he laid down his commission and departed also. It is a salutary reminder that we enjoy God's gift only through ... our obedience to Him and submission to his authority."

Wiersbe: "If anybody had an excuse for worrying, it was the Apostle Paul. His beloved Christian friends at Philippi were disagreeing with one another, and he was not there to help them... Added to these burdens was the possibility of his own death! ...

What is worry? The Greek word translated '*anxious*' (*careful*) in verse 6 means 'to be pulled in different directions.' Our hopes pull us in one direction; our fears pull us the opposite direction; and we are pulled apart!..

From the spiritual point of view, worry is wrong thinking (the mind) and wrong feeling (the heart) about circumstances, people, and things. Worry is the greatest thief of joy. It is not enough for us, however, to tell ourselves to 'quit worrying,' because that will never capture the thief. Worry is an 'inside job,' and it takes more than good intentions to get the victory. The antidote to worry is the secure mind ... we must meet the conditions that God has laid down. There are three: right praying (vv. 6-7), right thinking (v. 8), and right living (v. 9)."

Roper:

When I think of forbearing men, two illustrations come to mind from the Old Testament. The first is Abraham. Abraham was from Ur of the Chaldees in the Tigris-Euphrates Valley, an area where the people were idol worshipers with little knowledge of the true God. He was called by God over into the land of Canaan. When he arrived there the Lord gave him the promise of the entire land. It was all to be his. The dimensions of the land are described for us in the book of Genesis - from beyond Mt. Hermon in the north all the way south to the land of Egypt, from the Mediterranean Sea east to the Tigris-Euphrates Valley. God gave him the title deed - the promise which was conditioned on the faithfulness of God.

As the story unfolds you come to the episode when Lot's herdsmen came in conflict with Abraham's herdsmen as their flocks began to multiply. Lot, though he was Abraham's nephew, was a source of strife in the family. So Abraham confronted Lot with the situation. Now, Abraham could have insisted that Lot give him the land, that Lot move his flocks someplace else, because the land was Abraham's. But he didn't do it. He let Lot choose. Lot chose the Valley of Sidon, the area around Sodom and Gomorrah. And the rest of his life is a story of steady decline in the quality of that life. At the very end you find him living in a cave outside the region of Sodom and Gomorrah. He had lost his wealth. He had, for all practical purposes, lost his family - his daughters were hopelessly corrupted by their life in Sodom. He had nothing to show for his choice.

On the other hand Abraham, who let God choose for him, had the whole land. God took him up on a mountain and said, "Abraham, look to the north and the south and the east and the west as far as your eye can see - that is your land." God multiplied his flocks and his family and gave him thousands upon thousands of descendents, because Abraham let God make the choice for him. He let God fight his battles.

I think also of Moses. Moses is described in the Old Testament as the meekest man whoever lived, i.e., he did not insist on his own rights, he didn't defend himself. Whenever conflict would develop in the nation of Israel, whenever he was opposed in his leadership, Moses would go to a little tent he kept off to the side, and he would get on his knees and say, "Lord, what shall I do?" And the Lord would fight his battles for him. Moses never had to defend himself. He never had to insist that he was the leader. He let God fight his battles.

That is forbearance. Paul says, "Let your forbearance be known to all men because the Lord is at hand. The Lord will fight your battles." We don't have to defend ourselves. We may have to defend the rights of others, and we may have to stand up for a principle which is at stake, but where our own rights are all that is at stake we don't need to defend ourselves. God will fight for us. He is at hand."

Gromacki: "Faith must lead to constructive action. Negative anxiety must be replaced by positive habits (cf. Eph. 4:25, 28-29). After praying, a believer must get involved in right thinking and doing. The two imperatives ('*think*' and '*do*') give these two apostolic directives.... cf. popular axiom:

Sow a thought, reap an action.
Sow an action, reap a habit.
Sow a habit, reap a character.
Sow a character, reap a destiny."

Carson: "Paul is returning to a theme that was very strong in the previous chapter: we are to emulate worthy Christian leaders. In this context, that theme is now applied to the discipline of the mind. We are to emulate Christian leaders who have clearly disciplined their minds. Of course, we have no access to the mind and thoughts of another except through what that mind says and does. But that is the point. Paul is saying, in effect: What was on my mind when I was with you? What did I talk about? What did I read? What was the burden of my conversation? What did I value? What did I do to improve my mind?"

Boice: "The virtues mentioned here are pagan virtues. These words do not occur in the great lists of Christian virtues, list that include love, joy, peace, long-suffering, and so on. On the whole they are taken from Greek ethics and from the writings of the Greek philosophers. What does this mean? It means that in using them Paul is actually sanctifying, as it were, the generally accepted virtues of pagan morality. And he is saying that although the pursuit of the best things by Christians will necessarily mean the pursuit of fellowship with God, pursuit of the will of God, pursuit of all means to advance the claims of the Gospel, and other spiritual things also, it will not mean the exclusion of the best values that the world has to offer. The things that are acknowledged to be honorable by the best men everywhere are also worthy to be cultivated by Christians. Consequently, a Christian can love all that is true, honest, just, pure, lovely, and of good report, wherever he finds it. He can rejoice in the best of art and good literature. He can thrill to great music. He can thrive on beautiful architecture. And he should do it."

Martin: "The use of ethical lists was a feature of Stoic religion, and lists of vices and virtues are also found in the book of Wisdom and in Philo. It is, however, more important to note that all the terms used here, except the word translated *good report*, are found in the LXX ... While it is true that, according to Dibelius, these ethical expressions are 'terms of popular moral philosophy' current in Paul's day, the LXX influence ought to be reckoned with as a strong factor guiding the apostle's thought."

Pentecost: "The greatest area of sin in the believer's life is not the area of actions but the area of thought. There is a whole classification of sins that we would have to call sins of the mind. What was the first sin of Lucifer? It was pride. What is that? A sin of the mind. What is lust? A sin of the mind. What is covetousness? A sin of the mind. Greed? A sin of the mind. Suspicion? A sin of the mind. Discouragement? A sin of the mind. We could go on and on. Those sins are more real to the child of God than such sins as adultery and murder and theft. That is a testimony to the fact there is a warfare going on. Satan is attacking the mind. Therefore this word of the Apostle Paul concerning the use we make of our minds is so relevant to us today: meditate, ruminare, dwell on these things."

TEXT: PHILIPPIANS 4:10-23

TITLE: GOD SHALL SUPPLY ALL YOUR NEEDS

BIG IDEA:

GOD CAN BE TRUSTED TO PROVIDE ALL MATERIAL NEEDS FOR THOSE WHO PARTNER IN THE MINISTRY OF THE GOSPEL

INTRODUCTION:

Paul and the Philippian believers were partners in the ministry of the gospel

I. (:10-16) CONTENTMENT AND COMMENDATION EXPRESSED TO SUPPORTERS

A. Contentment -- The Lesson of Contentment Must be Learned by Christian Workers and Communicated to Supporters

1. (:11) Summary: Contentment vs. Complaining Despite the Circumstances
*"Not that I speak from want; for I have learned to be content in whatever circumstances I am."
"in any and every circumstance I have learned the secret"*
2. (:12a) Contentment in Hard Times
*"I know how to get along with humble means"
"I have learned the secret of going hungry"
"and of suffering need"*
3. (:12b) Contentment in Prosperous Times
*"and I also know how to live in prosperity"
"I have learned the secret of being filled"
"both of having abundance"*
4. (:13) Secret of Contentment
"I can do all things through Him who strengthens me"

B. Commendation -- Repeated Commendation Should be the Response to Repeated Generous Gifts

1. (:10) Commendation for Concern Shown As Opportunity Allows
"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."
2. (:14) The Principle of Contentment Does Not Nullify the Need for Support
"Nevertheless, you have done well to share with me in my affliction."
3. (:15-16) Commendation for Repeated Faithfulness in Supporting Paul

"And you yourselves also know, Philippians, that at the first preaching of the gospel, after I departed from Macedonia, no church shared with me in the matter of giving and receiving but you alone; for even in Thessalonica you sent a gift more than once for my needs."

II. (:17-20) PROFIT AND PROVISION

A. Profit -- Who Ultimately Profits More from the Gift?

1. (:17) The Giver

"Not that I seek the gift itself, but I seek for the profit which increases to your account."

Wiersbe: "Paul looked upon their missionary gift as an investment that would pay them rich spiritual dividends. The word '*communicate*' is our familiar word '*fellowship*.' The church entered into an arrangement of '*giving and receiving*'; the church gave materially to Paul, and received spiritually from the Lord. The Lord keeps the books and will never fail to pay one spiritual dividend! That church is poor that fails to share materially with others."

2. (:18a) But the Recipient Profits as Well

"But I have received everything in full, and have an abundance; I am amply supplied, having received from Epaphroditus what you have sent"

3. (:18b) More Importantly, God is Well Pleased

"a fragrant aroma, an acceptable sacrifice, well-pleasing to God."

B. Provision -- Who Ultimately Must Trust God for the Provision of Material Needs?

1. (:19) Both the Giver

"And my God shall supply all your needs according to His riches in glory in Christ Jesus."

Pentecost: Examples of God supplying needs --

- Israel in the wilderness for 40 years
- 12 disciples sent out to preach (Luke 9:2,3; 22:35; Matt 6:25-33)

2. (:13) And the Recipient

Repeat: *"I can do all things through Him who strengthens me."*

3. (:20) Doxology

"Now to our God and Father be the glory forever and ever. Amen."

(:21-23) CLOSING GREETINGS AND BENEDICTION

A. (:21-22) Mutual Greetings

1. (:21a) Giving the Greeting

"Greet every saint in Christ Jesus"

2. (:21b-22) Receiving the Greeting

"The brethren who are with me greet you.

All the saints greet you, especially those of Caesar's household."

B. (:23) Benediction

"The grace of the Lord Jesus Christ be with your spirit."

* * * * *

DEVOTIONAL QUESTIONS:

1) Are we aggressive in taking the initiative to invest in the Lord's work and making the most of our opportunities? Do we believe that the Lord will respond *with "profit which increases to our account"*?

2) How would our lives be changed if we experienced the same type of deprivation that Paul did and had to learn to trust the Lord in such circumstances of *"going hungry"* and *"suffering need"*. What kind of lessons about themselves do the people on the TV series *Survivors* learn about themselves?

3) How is verse 13 sometimes used out of context? What is the right application for this precious promise of God?

4) Is God well-pleased with the types of sacrifices that we have been presenting to Him?

* * * * *

QUOTES FOR REFLECTION:

Pentecost: "To be content is the opposite of to be covetous, to be greedy, to be worldly, to be materialistic. When Paul met the Lord Jesus Christ on the Damascus Road, the greed that had characterized his life was suddenly taken out, and his life was filled with Jesus Christ."

Barclay: "By *autarkeia* the Stoics meant a state of mind in which a man was absolutely and entirely independent of all things and of all people, a state in which a man had taught himself to need nothing and to need no one. The Stoic proposed to reach that state by a certain pathway of the mind. (i) He proposed to eliminate all desire. The Stoic rightly believed that contentment did not consist in possessing much but in wanting little. 'If you want to make a man happy,' they said, 'add not to his possession,

but take away from his desires.' Socrates was once asked who was the wealthiest man. He answered: 'He who is content with least, for *autarkeia*, *self-sufficiency*, is nature's wealth.' The Stoic believed that the only way to contentment was to abolish all desire until a man had come to a stage when nothing and no one were essential to him. (ii) The Stoic proposed to eliminate all emotion, all feeling, until he had come to a stage when he did not care what happened either to himself or to anyone else... (iii) How was this to be done? It was to be done by a deliberate act of will which saw in everything the will of God. The Stoic believed that literally nothing could happen to him or to anyone else which was not the will of God...

We see at once the difference between the Stoics and Paul. The Stoic said, 'I will learn contentment by a deliberate act of my own will.' Paul said, 'I can do all things through Christ who infuses His strength into me.' For the Stoic contentment was a human achievement; for Paul it was a divine gift. The Stoic was self-sufficient; but Paul was God-sufficient. Stoicism failed because it was inhuman; Christianity succeeded because it was rooted in the divine."

Gromacki: "Paul never asked for support, but he did not refuse it if it came unasked from outside sources. He never took money from the people to whom he was presently ministering."

Walvoord: "In a sense, every gift is an act of faith because, in many cases, justification could be found for retaining the gift for the selfish benefit of the donor. However, having shared with Paul and thus depriving themselves of what benefit their offering might have been to themselves, they also placed themselves in a faith relationship to God where they could in a special sense depend upon God's supply of their own needs. This would be in keeping with the riches to be found in the glory in Christ Jesus, that is, according to the infinite resources of God."

Wiersbe: "All of nature depends on hidden resources. The great trees send their roots down into the earth to draw up water and minerals. Rivers have their sources in the snow-capped mountains. The most important part of a tree is the part you cannot see, the root system, and the most important part of the Christian's life is the part that only God sees. Unless we draw upon the deep resources of God by faith, we fail against the pressures of life. Paul depended on the power of Christ at work in his life."

Motyer: "But the key to it all is *in Christ Jesus*. He mediates to us all the benefits and blessings of God. More than that, he is himself the sum of all the blessings, for the preposition is not '*through*' but '*in*'. He is not a channel along which they flow, but a place in which they are deposited. It is finally because of Christ that Paul is contented, and it is Christ whom he offers to us as the means and guarantee of our contentment. For Paul, the person who possesses Christ possesses all."

Walvoord: "Taken as a whole, the epistle to the Philippians contributes immeasurably to Christian doctrine and triumphant experience. In one sense it revolves around the principal characters -- Paul, Timothy and Epaphroditus. In another sense it centers in the Philippian church, whose ten years of history were an epic in the grace of God. In

the deepest sense, however, Christ is the center of this epistle. It is the mind of Christ, His love, His humiliation, His willingness to suffer, and His exaltation which constitute the supreme illustration of obedience to God, and the reminder that after suffering comes the glory. A proper relationship to the Lord Jesus Christ would bring about the experiencing of the mind of Christ by the Philippian church, with resulting unity and love for each other and the minimizing of internal conflicts and friction. In Christ also is found supremely the doctrine of grace -- grace as a way of salvation and as a way of life -- in contrast to the Judaizing teaching which Paul rebukes, and in even sharper contrast to the antinomian sects which have not apprehended the grace of God at all.

Above all, the apostle wants the Philippian church to experience triumphant peace -- peace among themselves, peace of heart, peace of mind, and peace in relation to earthly things and circumstances. In this his exhortation is an extension of his own experience and his own triumph."

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Goins, Doug. Peninsula Bible Church, Mountain View, CA.

Website: <http://www.pbc.org/dp/goins>

Hoke, David.

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Holwick, David.

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