

Philippians

Paul's Letter to the Philippians

The Christian travels on the narrow road through the kingdom of darkness to the Kingdom of Light. Along the way we are to share the gospel to all those whom God places in our path. It is our purpose not to force feed but to make available the saving knowledge of Jesus Christ so that men may make a choice between acceptance or rejection of faith in the King of kings and Lord of lords, the Savior of the world, the Redeemer of mankind, who by God's grace the gift of salvation is made for them. As Christ Himself the Christian will face opposition, mockery, persecution and possibly death for the sake of Christ. So how is the Christian to live as citizens of the Kingdom of God in a non-Christian world? How is the Christian to respond to those of the world when they are hostile towards them? Paul wrote this letter to the Philippian Church to encourage the faith of the faithful Christians in Philippi as they were persecuted by those of the worldly way. In this letter of Paul's he strengthens them in the difficulties that they were facing. This letter was written while Paul was in a Roman prison so he too was suffering for his faith in Jesus Christ. Paul wrote this letter with a joyful heart that demonstrates that a Christian can remain passionate for Christ in the worst of situations.

Introduction

Author and Date

Philippians, as well as Ephesians, Colossians and Philemon, were written during Paul's imprisonment at Rome between 60-62 A. D. This is apparent in the mention of the praetorian guard in Philippians 1:13 along with the saints of Caesar's household in Philippians 4:22. We also have to consider the similarities between details of Paul's imprisonment given in the book of Acts and the four letters known as the Prison Epistles. Paul was guarded by Roman soldiers, (Acts 28:16 Philippians 1:13-14) Paul was permitted to have visitors, (Acts 28:30 Philippians 4:18) and also had opportunity to preach the gospel. (Acts 28:31 Philippians 1:12-14 Ephesians 6:18-20 Colossians 4:2-4)

Some have argued that these letters were written during Paul's imprisonment in Caesarea. (Acts 24:27) This is highly rejected as Paul did not have the same privileges as afforded him in Rome. (Acts 23:35) We also see in the Prison Epistles Paul's expression of a favorable verdict in his trial in Rome. (Philippians 1:25 Philippians 2:24 Philemon 1:22) Paul's only hope in Caesarea was to bribe Felix (Acts 24:26) or to stand trial in Jerusalem under Festus. (Acts 25:9) The verdict that Paul was expecting was to be a final verdict which would not have been possible in Caesarea as Paul had appealed to the Emperor. (Philippians 1:20-23 Philippians 2:17,23)

Others have suggested that Paul wrote the Prison Epistles while at Ephesus. Neither would have this been possible as again Paul was expecting a final decision there in his appeal to be heard in front of the Emperor. Another point against Ephesus was that Luke was with Paul when he wrote the letter to Colossians. (Colossians 4:14) Luke, however,

was not with Paul when he was in Ephesus. Acts Chapter 19 is not in the “we” section of Acts as Luke was not with Paul at this time. Finally there is no evidence that Paul was ever imprisoned in Ephesus.

Philippi

Philippi was originally known as Krenides (“The Little Fountains”) because of its numerous nearby fountains. Philippi (“city of Philip”) was named after Philip the second of Macedon who was the father of Alexander the Great. Philip conquered the region in the fourth century B. C. because of the abundance of Gold in the region. By the second century B.C. Philippi became a Roman province of Macedonia.

Philippi existed for the next two centuries with little notice until a famous event in Roman history brought it notoriety. In 42 B.C. a battle between the forces of Antony and Octavian defeated those of Brutus and Cassius at the battle of Philippi. This battle ended the Roman Republic and ushered in the Romans Empire. At the end of this battle Philippi became a Roman colony. (Acts 16:12) Many of the veterans of the battle became residence of the city of Philippi. As a Roman colony Philippi had autonomy from the provincial government and had the same rights of Roman cities in Italy. These included the use of Roman law, tax exemption, and Roman citizenship. (Acts 16:21) The citizens of Philippi used Latin as their official language, adopted the Roman customs, and formed their government after the model of Italian cities. The colonial status of Philippi is mentioned both in Acts and Philippians.

The Church at Philippi was the first one founded by Paul in Europe. Paul founded the Church during his seconded missionary trip. (Acts 16:12-40) The Jewish population was very small and there were not enough men to form a synagogue. The requirement was that there was to be 10 men as Heads of a Household in order to form a synagogue. There were some devout women who met outside of the city at a place of prayer along the Gangites River. It was there that Paul preached the gospel and a woman named Lydia a merchant of expensive purple dyed goods became a believer. (Acts 16:14-15) It is probable that the Philippian Church began in her home.

Paul also faced satanic opposition in the person of a fortune telling slave girl. (Acts 16:16-17) Not wanting her evil testimony Paul cast the demon out of her. (Acts 16:19) Because of this Paul was hauled before the city magistrate where the citizens of Philippi claimed his preaching was damaging to Roman customs. (Acts 16:20-21) Paul and Silas were then beaten and imprisoned. (Acts 16:22-24) That night there was an earthquake and an unnerved jailer opened his heart to the gospel message along with his family. (Acts 16:25-34) The next day the magistrate learned that Paul and Silas were Roman citizens and therefore could not be beaten. The magistrate begged Paul and Silas to leave the city to avoid further trouble.

While Paul was imprisoned in Rome the Philippian Church sent Epaphroditus to minister to Paul’s needs. Epaphroditus became ill while in Rome and Paul sent him back to Philippi (Philippians 2:25-26) along with the Letter to the Philippians.

Paul had five purposes for writing his letter to the Philippians. First he wanted to express his thanks for the gift that the Philippians had sent him. Second Paul wanted the Philippians to know why he had sent Epaphroditus back to them and that Epaphroditus had made a successful trip to Rome. Third Paul wanted the Philippians to know of Paul's circumstances at Rome. Fourth he wanted to exhort them to remain in unity and finally Paul wanted to warn them about false teachers in the Church.

Chapter 1

Greeting

Verses 1-2

Paul opens his letter to the Philippian Church with his usual greeting and identifying the senders of the letter and the recipients of his letter. Timothy is with Paul at the writing of this letter in Rome where Paul was imprisoned. Timothy was one of Paul's most trusted co-workers in the ministry. Timothy was often referred as Paul's beloved son in the faith. Timothy was not a co-author of this letter but possibly was the one to whom Paul dictated the letter to. Paul also identifies them both as bondservants of Jesus Christ. Other translations use the term as slaves of Jesus Christ. A slave is one who is willingly and happily linked to his master. In this case Paul and Timothy are devoted to their Master Jesus Christ.

Timothy

Timothy traveled with Paul for much of his missionary career and was one of Paul's best loved and most trusted assistants. Two of Paul's last letters were written to Timothy at a time when Timothy was providing leadership for the Church in Ephesus, near the end of Paul's life.

Timothy had a devout mother and grandmother, (2 Timothy 1:5) and he was highly respected by the Christians in his hometown of Lystra, and in nearby Iconium. He joined Paul's missionary team on Paul's second missionary journey. Paul speaks of prophetic words that confirmed Timothy's selection. Timothy also received a special gifting for service through the laying on of hands of the elders and of Paul (1 Timothy 1:18 1 Timothy 4:14 2 Timothy 1:6) Out of difference to the Jews in the area, Paul had Timothy circumcised. (Acts 16:1-3)

Over the next fifteen years, Paul sent Timothy on special assignments to several different Churches. (Acts 19:22 1 Corinthians 4:17 1 Corinthians 16:10-11 Philippians 2:19-23 1 Thessalonians 3:2-6 1 Timothy 1:3) Paul included Timothy's name as coauthor of several of his letters. (2 Corinthians 1:1 Philippians 1:1 Colossians 1:1 1 Thessalonians 1:1 2 Thessalonians 1:1 Philemon 1:1) Paul had a close relationship with Timothy and held him in high regard. (Romans 16:21 1 Corinthians 4:17 1 Thessalonians 3:2 1 Timothy 1:2 1 Timothy 6:11 2 Timothy 1:2) As Paul neared the end of his life and waited his sentence in prison, he longed to see Timothy. (2 Timothy 1:3-4) Of all Paul's co-workers, Timothy especially is committed to his selfless concern for Christ and his people. (Philippines 2:20-22)

Timothy was exemplary in the way he faithfully served the cause of Christ behind the scenes, devoting himself selflessly and with single minded focus to the work of Christ wherever help was needed. (Philippians 2:20-22) He serves as a reminder that even shy people may become strong and effective witnesses for Christ.

The letter is addressed to the Saints of the Church of Philippi. A saint is a true believer and follower of Jesus Christ who have been made holy in the sight of God by the redeeming work of Jesus. (Ephesians 1:4,7) The saints of Christ's Church are being sanctified by the transforming work of the Holy Spirit. Paul also addresses this letter to the overseers and deacons of the Church. The term overseers are the people who hold the positions of leadership and responsibility within the Church. These people would be the elders, who are also called pastors and bishops. All three terms, elder, pastor and bishop are used in the New Testament to describe the same men. And Paul includes in his greeting the deacons who serve attending to the practical matters of the Church. The early Church had no professional Pastors as they do today.

Paul gives his standard grace and peace greeting to remind the believers of their relationship with God. Grace is the unmerited favor that God bestows upon man. Peace is the well-being and contentedness which is rooted in the gospel and comes about by the Holy Spirit. (Galatians 5:22)

Thanksgiving and Prayer

Verses 3-11

When Paul severed his relationship to Judaism he most assuredly lost a lot of the associates that he had befriended along the way. Undoubtedly with the new gift of love from God the bonds of friendship through Christ towards his fellow believers in Christ were strong and deep rooted. Now Paul is writing from a Roman prison and is expressing his thankfulness to God his remembrance of his Christian friends in the Philippian Church. They had joined him in the spreading of the gospel message.

The Christians at Philippi were extraordinary towards Paul and his ministry both when he was with them (Acts 16:15 Acts 16:32-34) and when he was a part from them. (2 Corinthians 8:1-7 2 Corinthians 9:1-4 2 Corinthians 11:9)

Because of this bond with the Philippians Paul finds great joy in offering prayers of petition on behalf of them. Paul prayed for them with joy as he felt that this was one way that he could repay them for all that they had done for him. I am sure in times sadness while in a Roman prison that Paul would pray. There is a great joy when we pray for others. Joy in one's heart is greatly needed when in prison and possibly facing execution. It is a revelation to our souls to have a close fellowship with Jesus through prayer and it is an experience that triumphs over life's adverse circumstances. *"This is Paul's great singing letter. It was at Philippi that he had sung in prison at midnight, in the company of Silas. Now he was again in prison, this time in Rome."* (Morgan)

The Christians at Philippi were behind Paul and his ministry from the beginning. They didn't wait to see if he would be successful before joining him they stepped out on faith

and joined in. therefore, Paul refers them as his partners in the ministry as they were faithful participants. It was their friendship and financial support that they gave from the first day until now.

Paul not only thought of the beginning of the work the Philippians had begun but also the completion of that work. Here Paul expresses his confidence in God that He is able to complete the work through them. We, as the Philippians, are now involved in a good work that God has begun with us. *“The work of grace has its root in the divine goodness of the Father, it is planted by the self-denying goodness of the Son, and it is daily watered by the goodness of the Holy Spirit; it springs from good and leads to good, and so is altogether good.”* (Spurgeon) Now that the work had begun Paul was confident that God is a worker who completes His work. “Where is there an instance of God’s beginning any work and leaving it incomplete? Show me for once a world abandoned and thrown aside half formed; show me a universe cast off from the Great Potter’s wheel, with the design in outline, the clay half hardened, and the form unshapely from incompleteness.” (Spurgeon) The good work which has begun will be fully completed on “the day of Jesus Christ.” This is not a reference to the Day of Judgment but the second coming of Jesus and the day that the Christians will be resurrected with Him. “Holy Scripture does not regard a man as perfect when the soul is perfected, it regards his body as being a part of himself; and as the body will not rise again from the grave till the coming of the Lord Jesus, when we shall be revealed in the perfection of our manhood, even as he will be revealed, that day of the second coming is set as the day of the finished work which God hath begun.” (Spurgeon)

Paul justified his thankfulness and joy for the Philippian Church because they had stood by him through all the trials for the gospel. They had received the same grace from God that Paul had received. Paul was the highly educated Apostle but he was also a man with a great heart, and the Christians at Philippi were in his heart. As the Apostle Peter had said “Lord, You know all things.” (John 21:17) Therefore, Paul could call God as his witness that his affection for them was deep. *“I call God to witness that I have the strongest affection for you, and that I love you with that same kind of tender concern with which Christ loved the world when he gave himself for it.”* (Clarke)

The Philippians had a lot of love, love for God, love for each other, love for Paul and a love for the lost. But Paul prays that their love will abound all the more. It does not matter that we may have exceeding love for other people we should always pray that God will give us ever a greater love. *“That it may be like a river, perpetually fed with rain and fresh streams so that it continues to swell and increase until it fills all its banks, and floods the adjacent plains.”* (Clarke)

The love that Paul was praying for the Philippians to receive was not a blind love but a love that was full of knowledge and discernment. A love that could approve what was excellent. Love without insightful judgment can be a dangerous undiscerning love. Paul had rebuked the Corinthian Church for their openness in love for which they gloried in.

Their love was a love that had no sense of knowledge and discernment. (1 Corinthians 5:1-7)

When we approve and receive that which is excellent, that which comes from an inner righteousness, then we become sincere and are not offensive in our outer righteousness. This is the renewing that we are to undergo, a continuing growth to the image of Christ until the day He returns. Being sincere and without offence work together, if they are alone it is not enough. Blatant sinners can be sincere and the Pharisees in Jesus' day were with offence. We want God to make us both sincere and without offence.

It is God's work that brings this goal about as we are being "filled with the fruits of righteousness." When we abide in Jesus we will always bear fruit. (John 15:4-6) As we abide in Jesus we will receive the daily bread that we need for life, it is the spiritual nutrient we need to naturally bear fruit for the glory and praise of God. *"Every genuine follower of God has his glory in view by all that he does, says, or intends. He loves to glorify God, and he glorifies him by showing forth in his conversion the glorious working of the glorious power of the Lord."* (Clarke)

Verses 12-14

In answering the question that many have, "why has God allowed this to happen to me?" Paul describes to the Philippians that his imprisonment was not a hindrance to his work of spreading the good news but actually had become a blessing to his work. Paul wanted the Philippians to know that God's blessing and power were still with him while he was in prison. He was not out of God's will by being imprisoned and that his work for the Lord continued on.

At the time when Paul was with the Philippians God had shown amazing examples of His sovereign power. This display of God's divine power culminated in a jailbreak and the vindication of Paul before the civil magistrates. (Acts 16:11-40) It would not be surprising if the Philippians were wondering where that divine power was now that Paul was imprisoned in Rome. Paul's time there under watch of the Roman guards was also a furtherance of the gospel because during that time Paul wrote his epistles to the Ephesians, Philippians and the Colossians. Paul's time in Roman imprisonment was not a waste of time, as God never wastes our time, although we may waste it by not discerning God's purpose in the circumstances that we are in.

The purpose of the follower of Jesus is to advance the gospel message of the Christ. It is to be our purpose and passion as we preserve in the furtherance of the gospel. During Paul's time in Roman imprisonment the gospel message was being advanced. It became clear to those who watched over Paul that he was not just a common criminal but that he was an emissary of Jesus Christ. This led to the conversion of many and even some of the palace guard. Because Paul was focused on his mission for Jesus he could even under these circumstances effectively bring glory to God. Paul did not need the easy path in order to be fruitful.

Paul continued work in spite of the Roman restrictions gave confidence also to those who were around him but not imprisoned as he showed greater confidence and boldness.

- They saw that Paul had joy in the midst of his trials.
- They saw in the circumstances that Paul was in God would take care of him.
- They saw that even as Paul was in jail God could still use him greatly.

Verses 15-18

Others who were spreading the gospel message in Paul's day were competitive in that they wanted to surpass the ministry of Paul and be able to hold their name and position above Paul's. They were openly glad that Paul was in prison because they felt this gave them an advantage in their perceived contest of preaching the gospel message. They were motivated not out a love for Jesus Christ but by a competitive spirit. This is often seen today among preachers. Paul did not lump all preachers of the gospel into one basket as he knew that some also preached from good will.

But those who preached out of selfish ambition were doing so with the wrong motives. They did serve the Lord but they did not serve Him sincerely. Ambition itself is not necessarily a bad thing and there is nothing wrong with wanting and trying to be the best they can for God. But having a selfish ambition is concerned with one producing a successful image for themselves. This is not the path to true success in the ministry for the Lord, as the Lord looks at the heart of a man.

Those who preached the gospel with the wrong motives also added to the affliction of Paul's chains. Their competitiveness was to only advance themselves and in want for Paul to lose. There hope was the have Paul to endure their humiliation and have to admit that their work was more effective than his. Paul really did not have too much concern for their behavior because he did not have a competitive spirit towards his ministry. Paul's work was not to please man but to please God.

A.W. Tozer wrote the following rebuking the attitude of preachers being in competition with one another in the ministry of the gospel. *"Dear Lord, I refuse henceforth to compete with any of Thy servants. They have congregations larger than mine. So be it. I rejoice in their success. They have greater gifts. Very well. That is not in their power nor in mine. I am humbly grateful for their greater gifts and my smaller ones. I only pray that I may use to Thy glory such modest gifts as I possess. I will not compare myself with any, nor try to build up my self-esteem by noting where I may excel one or another in Thy holy work. I herewith make a blanket disavowal of all intrinsic worth. I am but an unprofitable servant. I gladly go to the foot of the cross and own myself the least of Thy people. If I err in my self-judgment and actually underestimate myself I do not want to know it. I purpose to pray for others and to rejoice in their prosperity as if it were my own. And indeed it is my own if it is Thine own, for what is Thine is mine, and while one plants and another waters it is Thou alone that giveth the increase."*

Other preachers of the gospel of Christ were motivated by Paul imprisonment. Some were motivated in a good way and some bad but Paul could rejoice in that either way the gospel

message was being preached. It was not the concern of Paul the content of the gospel message but the motive that the message was being preached. Paul would protest if the thought of perverted or false doctrine was preached even if done so with the best of motives. (Galatians 1:6-9) The attitude of Paul was that "If you preach the true gospel, I don't care what your motives are. If your motives are bad, God will deal with you - but at least the gospel is preached. But if you preach a false gospel, I don't care how good your motives are. You are dangerous and must stop preaching your false gospel, and good motives don't excuse your false message." Paul's imprisonment did not hinder the advancement of the gospel and neither did the wrong motive of some of the other preachers God's work was getting done and Paul was able to rejoice in that.

Verses 19-20

Paul was confident that the Lord was in full control of all events. Even in this time of imprisonment and the pending trial before Caesar Nero, which made the situation look dim. The word deliverance is from the basic Greek term for salvation. It can also mean well-being or escape which presents four possible interpretations. 1) It refers to Paul's ultimate salvation. 2) It alludes to his deliverance from threatened execution. 3) Paul would finally be vindicated by the emperor's ruling. 4) Paul is talking about his eventual release from prison. Although later we see in Paul's second letter to Timothy that he expected execution. (2 Timothy 4:6)

Part of Paul's confidence came because he knew that the Philippians were praying for him. In the present situation his deliverance was connected to their prayers. We can say, hypothetically, that if the Philippians were not earnestly praying for Paul that his deliverance would have been hindered. Paul believed this and it shows the importance of prayer and that prayer is to be taken seriously.

It was not only the prayers of the Philippians that would meet Paul's need for deliverance. It was his faith in the supply of the Spirit of Jesus that would come through the prayers of the Philippians. Paul's needs were met by the Spirit of God, but that provision was given to Paul and brought about by the prayers of the Philippians.

Paul expresses his faith in his earnest expectation and hope that would come from the grace of God. Paul first trusted God and in nothing he would be ashamed. Because Paul believed that he was in the will of God, God would not cause him to be ashamed and is faithful and true and would not turn away from him.

Whatever the outcome of Paul's plight, rather it be life or death, Christ would be magnified in his body. Paul knew that his release may not be to outcome and it could result in his martyrdom. It was not Paul's purpose in life to preserve and promote himself, but to glorify Jesus Christ. If it be the will of Jesus that Paul could beset glorify him by laying down his life, then Paul would be openly pleased by that opportunity. This may have caused a hard feeling upon the Philippians who had seen God do many remarkable miracles of deliverance in Paul's life among them in Philippi. (Acts 16:11-40) It is easier for us and the Philippians to associate God's glory with our deliverance from the problems in our life.

But our trust and faith is proved when delivered in the midst of our problems. Many of us want to dictate to God how He can dictate His glory in our lives but Paul in his wisdom left that up to God.

Living for Christ

From prison Paul writes. "To me, living means living for Christ." (Philippians 1:21) Why are believers called to devote their lives to Christ?

1. Believers acknowledge that they owe everything to Christ, especially their salvation. Devoting their life to His service expresses their eternal indebtedness and gratitude. (Romans 12:1)
2. Believers acknowledge Christ as their Master and Lord and submit to Christ's rule in their lives. They recognize that they belong to the Lord and no longer live simply for themselves. (Romans 14:7-9 2 Corinthians 5:14-15)
3. Believers now share in Christ's death and resurrection – they have died to themselves and have risen with Him. (Romans 6:13-14 Galatians 2:19-20) They have a new identity in Christ. (Philippians 3:20 Ephesians 1:11,14)
4. Believers recognize that everything of value is found in Christ. Things of the world that once seemed important have lost their attraction; nothing compares to the infinite value of knowing Christ. (Philippians 3:7-11 Ephesians 1:3-3:21 Colossians 1:15-3:4)

Verses 21-26

Death for the Christian is not an end but a beginning. The Christian does not fear death as it is a graduation to glory. Death then for the Christian is to gain life abundantly. There are two senses in which Paul's death would be gain. First, his death for the cause of Christ would glorify Jesus, and that was gain. Second, to be in the presence of the Lord would be gain for Paul. Paul's statement that death is gain argues against the idea of "soul sleep." Soul sleep is a false teaching that those who have died are held in a sort of suspended animation until the resurrection. Paul's idea that death would be gain also argues against the idea of purgatory. The belief of purgatory is that the believer once he had died has to be purified through suffering before coming into the presence of God. Paul also demonstrates that he had no fear of death. Some may fear dying but no Christian should fear death. *"When men fear death it is not certain that they are wicked, but it is quite certain that if they have faith it is in a very weak and sickly condition."* (Spurgeon)

Paul as an Apostle of Jesus Christ was sent to ***"go therefore and make disciples of all the nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and the Son and the Holy Spirit, teaching them to observe all that I commanded you."*** (Matthew 28:19:20) In this call Paul was confident that God intended him to be fruitful in the good work of the ministry. Paul lived in God's plan for him and no one can say that Paul's life was not fruitful for the Lord. A sad contrast to the life that Paul lived is that many Christians have not come to the place where they can bear much fruit for the Kingdom of God in their life.

Paul was pressed by his meditations of death or continuing on in the gospel ministry. Paul knew that his death would be gain for him by being in the complete presence of his Lord and Savior. Paul also believed that his work was not yet complete, the race was not yet won, and that his life would still be a benefit to the Philippines and others.

It is bold to say that Paul, in his own way, wanted to die. Using the word desire is a strong longing. ***“But I am hard-pressed from both directions, having the desire to depart and be with Christ, for that is very much better.”*** The word “desire” in this context shows an intense longing, as one who pants after water because of thirst. Other men have had this strong desire to die. Men who have been caught in the grip of gloom and darkness have often felt that death was there only way of escape. Many a man has become weary of the cruelty that others in this world have shown them that death seemed an attractive option. Others have been faced with overwhelming crisis which brought on either physical or mental suffering they felt was more than they could bear and sought death as the answer. But Paul’s desire to depart had nothing in common with these motivations to depart. For Paul departing this world would mean he would be in heaven and finally be done with sin and temptation. Being in heaven would also mean that Paul would be reunited with the Christian brothers and sisters that had gone on before him. The greatest of reward for Paul would be that he would be with his Lord and Master Jesus in a better and closer way than ever before.

“It appears to be a metaphor taken from the commander of a vessel, in a foreign port, who feels a strong desire, to set sail, and get to his own country and family; but this desire is counterbalanced by a conviction that the general interests of the voyage may be best answered by his longer stay in the port where his vessel now rides; for he is not in dock, he is not aground, but rides at anchor in the port, and may any hour weigh and be gone.” (Clarke)

“The sail is spread; the soul is launched upon the deep. How long will be its voyage? How many wearying winds must beat upon the sail ere it shall be reefed in the port of peace? How often that soul shall be tossed upon the waves before it comes to the sea that knows no storm. Oh tell it, tell it everywhere; yon ship that has just departed is already at its haven. It did but spread its sail and it was there.” (Spurgeon)

The other side of Paul’s meditation is that he knew others still needed him. Even as the threat of Paul’s martyrdom was very real he told the Philippians that he expected to be speared. "I know that I will remain and continue with you all for your progress and joy in the faith." Paul was not basking in self-pity and was confident in his full faith that he would eventually be released. Paul did survive this imprisonment and returned to visit the Philippian Church. Although later Paul was martyred in Rome under Nero. The friendship that Paul had with the Philippian Church was strong and he knew that they would rejoice to see him again.

Verse 27

Paul is urging the Philippians to work together in the cause of the gospel. Looking at the word “conduct” it translates from the Greek to mean “to live as a citizen.” Paul wanted the Philippians to be good, patriotic citizens of the Kingdom of God. Paul will again visit this theme in his letter to the Philippians. Paul felt that Christians were not only accountable to God but also accountable to each other in the faith. Paul wanted them to know that even in his absence he was aware of their behavior.

The Church is the body of Christ and Paul wanted the Philippians to stand together as one body of believers. He did not want to see them become fragmented and factionalized. Paul based his call for unity of heart on four points. 1) The necessity of oneness to win the spiritual battle for the faith. (Philippians 1:28-30) 2) The love of others in the fellowship. (Philippians 2:1-2) 3) A genuine humility and self-sacrifice. (Philippians 2:3-4) 4) Living in the example of Jesus Christ who proved that sacrifice produces eternal glory. (Philippians 2:5-11)

It was important to Paul that their unity was put to a productive purpose. This would cause an increasing trust and belief in the good news of Jesus Christ which would be promoted among those who already believed and those who had yet to believe.

Verse 28

Paul is saying do not be afraid or terrified by those who oppose the Church. The Greek language for terrified “*is a vivid term, unique in the Greek Bible and denoting the uncontrollable stampede of startled horses.*” (Martin) Paul was encouraging the Philippians to have the same kind of courage that he had in facing this kind of opposition.

When the Christian faces the opposition and is not terrified it is proof of perdition. Perdition means destruction and in this case meaning that if the Christian is unafraid it points to the certain destruction of the adversary. Perdition in the Greek is the word “*apolia*” and means destruction, wasting, or damnation. Another example of this word usage in the Scripture is Judas (John 17:12) and the Antichrist (2 Thessalonians 2:3) were they are both called the son of perdition. When a Christian stands strong against the intimidation of the world, the flesh and the devil, it shows the spiritual enemies that their ultimate destruction is a certainty. When the Christian stands unafraid and unintimidated by the spiritual enemy that have failed as they have no other weapon than fear and intimidation. If the Christian fails to stand boldly before the adversary it gives our spiritual enemies “*hope and confidence.*” It is a false hope and confidence because their destruction is still assured. The Christian is of salvation and has no real reason to be afraid and every reason to stand boldly upon his beliefs. This boldness for Christ is evidence of our own salvation and if we act on this truth in faith we will surprise ourselves with our boldness.

Verses 29-30

In this passage the word granted in the Greek is a verb that is translated from the noun for grace. It is by grace that the Christian has been privileged to believe in Christ. If by grace we believe then also by grace we suffer for Christ. This gift of grace from God to

believe and suffer for Christ sake is also a source of power in our walk with Christ. The trials that Paul, who was in prison, and the Philippians, who were facing great persecution, were not because God had abandoned them but because these experiences were tools in God's hand.

Paul states that we are to suffer for Christ sake. The Greek word for suffer is "pascho" and is used primarily in the sense of persecution. This word is often used for physical suffering that is not related to persecution. (Acts 28:5 Matthew 17:15) Pascho is also used for suffering under temptation. (Hebrews 2:8) Pascho is also used for hardships in a general sense. (1 Corinthians 12:26 Galatians 3:4)

"Everyone cannot be trusted with suffering. All could not stand the fiery ordeal. They would speak rashly and complainingly. So the Master has to select with careful scrutiny the branches which can stand the knife." (Meyer)

"Look up and take each throb of pain, each hour of agony, as a gift. Dare to thank Him for it. Look inside the envelope of pain for the message it enfolds. It is a rough packing-case, but there is treasure in it." (Meyer)

When Paul was in Philippi he had conflict there with the Jews and therefore knows and understands the conflict that the Philippians were having too. It is the same opposition that Christians face as now at the writing of this letter Paul was facing the same conflict in Rome. It is the conflict that we have in walking upright with the Lord and proclaiming His gospel while being persecuted and under attack. In the Greek the word conflict is "agon." Agon describes a place for athletic contests were held and later became the contest itself. The English words agony and agonize come from this Greek word. As Paul and the Philippians shared in the same kind of conflict they would also share in the joy and fruit in the midst of their trials.

Chapter 2

Verse 1

Paul has been telling the Philippians how to stand strong with the external conflicts they face in Chapter 1:27:30. Now Paul addresses the internal conflicts in the Philippian Church. "If there is any" is an introduction to Paul's exhortation to unity, humility, and love between the believers. Here is the idea that if the Christians in Philippi have received the message that Paul has given them then they have a responsibility to do what he is about to describe. *"It is extremely difficult to give the force of these expressions; they contain a torrent of most affecting eloquence; the apostle pouring out his whole heart to a people whom with all his heart he loved, and who were worthy of the love even of an apostle."* (Clarke)

Paul asks a rhetorical question to the Philippians knowing the answer. There is great consolation in knowing Christ. Every Christian should know the consolation that Jesus Christ gives. One of the titles that Jesus has as the Messiah is the Consolation of Israel.

(Luke 2:25) Paul noted the consolation of Christ in 2 Corinthians, **“For just as the sufferings of Christ are ours in abundance, so also our comfort is abundant through Christ.”** (2 Corinthians 1:5) Paul also said in Thessalonians, **“Now may our Lord Jesus Christ Himself and God our Father, who has loved us and given us eternal comfort and good hope by grace.”** (2 Thessalonians 2:16) Through God’s great love He has given us everlasting consolation. So, of course there is consolation in Christ. *“The Holy Spirit consoles, but Christ is the consolation. If I may use the figure, the Holy Spirit is the Physician, but Christ is the medicine.”* (Spurgeon)

Paul asks a second rhetorical question about the comfort of love. Again every Christian should know the comfort of love that Jesus gives them. In 2 Corinthians 1:3 Paul describes God as the God of all comfort. No matter what the circumstance that a Christian may find himself in it is not beyond God’s ability to comfort. But it is more than just comfort it is the comfort of love. Comfort in this passage is the Greek word “paraklesis” and it means more than soothing sympathy. It has a higher meaning of strengthening, of helping, and building up another to make them stronger. The Latin word for comfort is “Fortis” which also means brave. The Love of God makes us strong and brave. So, of course there is comfort of love.

Paul’s third rhetorical question concerns fellowship in the Spirit. Again every Christian should know what it is to have fellowship in the Spirit. The Greek word for fellowship is ‘kononia’ and it means the sharing of things that are in common. The Christian shares life in the Spirit that he had never known before. Our lives are filled and moved in a powerful way by the Holy Spirit. So, of course there is fellowship in the Spirit. *“The Lord does usually and graciously water the holy fellowship of his people with the dews of many sweet and glorious refreshing’s; so that they have a very heaven upon earth.”* (Trapp)

The final rhetorical question of Paul assumes that every Christian knows something about the affection and mercy of God. All these rhetorical questions are presented by Paul in a manner that suggest that they should be obvious to the Christian’s life. Each of these, consolation in Christ, comfort of love, fellowship of the Spirit, affection and mercy, are gifts and are communicated to the Christian in a spiritual way from Jesus. We also experience these gifts from fellow believers through Jesus. There is no doubt that these are real gifts to Christians to really experience.

Verses 2-4

Paul is making a personal request of the Church that he was the founding father of and that is to fulfill his joy. Paul wanted them to pay attention to his teachings and live the Christian life. If they would do this it would make Paul very happy.

“Being of the same mind, maintaining the same love, united in spirit, intent on one purpose.” All these together speak of the same idea, a sincere abiding internal unity within the Church. Here Paul is setting the goal and in the next two verses Paul gives descriptions on how to achieve and practice the unity mentioned in this verse.

Putting off our selfish ambitions is the first step in creating a unified environment. When living in the flesh we are often motivated by our own selfish desires and have a certain conceited attitude. With this attitude much of what we do is not out of love for others but for our own advancement or promotion. Paul is not saying the ambition is a bad thing but that ambition centered only upon one's self is bad. It is a good ambition to have which glorifies God and serves Him with all that we have.

The second step is to not doing anything motivated by conceit. Conceit is where one thinks too highly of themselves. People like this are excessive in self-interest and are self-preoccupied. The dictionary defines conceit as, an excessively favorable opinion of one's own ability, importance, wit, etc. When we become the number one in all that we do, being the most important, the most talented, we are operating out of God's will. We are working against the unity that Paul is pleading for the Philippians to have.

The third step to unity is to have lowliness of mind and regard others as better than yourself. This is completely contradictory to the way of the world. A lowliness of mind is about the least attractive thing to the thinking of the world. *"The pagan and the secular idea of manhood is self-assertiveness, imposing one's will on others; when anyone stooped to others he did so only under compulsion, hence his action was ignominious [disgraceful]. The Christian ethical idea of humility could not be reached by the secular mind; it lacked the spiritual soil."* (Lenski) *"In pagan writers generally, the word had a bad meaning, 'abject, groveling.' But when it comes into the New Testament, its meaning is ennobled."* (Wuest) *"The apostle knew that, to create concord, you need first to beget lowliness of mind. Men do not quarrel when their ambitions have come to an end."* (Spurgeon)

To regard others as better than yourself rebukes the culture's concept of self-esteem. We must recognize the intrinsic value of every human being. In some a low self-esteem is based in reality and justified. Many people who are in rebellion against God find themselves having a low self-esteem. When we have the attitude to esteem others as better than ourselves we will have a keener concern for their needs. This naturally will lead to a greater unity amongst the people of God. If we each consider each other as better than our self then an amazing thing happens, everyone is looked up to and no one is looked down upon.

If each not only looks to their own interest but also has a concern for the interests of others, then we will find ourselves in a community that truly looks out for each other.

Verse 5

Paul is about to deliver to us a wonderful hymn about the mind of Jesus. But before doing so Paul tells us what we must do with the information. *"Paul does not give all that is in the mind of Christ in these verses. He selects those qualities of our Lord which fit the needs of the Philippians at that moment. . . . This lack of unity among the Philippian saints became the occasion for perhaps the greatest Christological passage in the New Testament that sounds the depths of the incarnation."* (Wuest)

We are not to just read this passage and admire it from a distance from ourselves. It is a passage in which God wants us to be awed by. This is a description of His Son with whom He is well pleased. It is a description of the person we are to imitate. We have this choice to make as many of us live up to the standards of others we should not settle for anything less than the mind of God.

The Divine Nature of Christ

Philippians 2:6-11, often called the Christ hymn, reveals early Christian beliefs about the nature of Jesus. This hymn affirms that the early Christians believed in the preexistence and divine nature of Christ. (Colossians 1:15-20 Colossians 2:9 John 1:1-2 Hebrews 1:1-3) Christ is not simply another human Prophet. He was present with God the Father from the very beginning, and He is the one whom the universe was created. As the Son of God, He shares the nature of God Himself.

The hymn also affirms that Jesus Christ came to earth in an act of immense humility – the infinite God became a human. (Philippians 2:7 Colossians 1:15 John 1:10-14 Hebrews 2:14,17) Jesus Christ, the glorious Creator of the universe, died as a sacrificial offering for the sins of human beings so that we might be forgiven and be reconciled to God, (Philippians 2:8 John 3:14-17 Romans 5:9-10 Colossians 1:20,22 Colossians 2:13-14 Hebrews 1:3 Hebrews 10:9-14) as the Scriptures had foretold. (Isaiah 53:3-12

This hymn also affirms that God raised Jesus from the dead, has given him “the place of highest honor” in heaven, (Philippians 2:9) and conferred on Him the title “Lord.” (Philippians 2:11 Colossians 1:18) One day, all created beings will bow before Him and acknowledge that He is Lord of the entire universe, (Philippians 2:9-11) deserving of the worship that God alone is worthy to receive. (Revelation 5:8-14)

Verse 6

“Jesus did not begin His existence in a manger in Bethlehem but was in the form of God. This is His pre-incarnate form. (John 1:1-2) Jesus is God and is eternal. The Greek word for being is ‘huparchem’ and ‘describes that which a man is in his very essence and which cannot be changed. It describes that part of a man which, in any circumstances, remains the same.’ (Barclay) ‘Paul, by the use of the Greek word translated ‘being,’ informs his Greek readers that our Lord’s possession of the divine essence did not cease to be a fact when He came to earth to assume human form. . . . This word alone is enough to refute the claim of Modernism that our Lord emptied Himself of His Deity when He became Man.’ (Wuest)

The Greek word for form is ‘Morphe’ It *“always signifies a form which truly and fully expresses the being which underlies it . . . the words mean ‘the being on an equality with God.’” (Expositors) “Morphe is the essential form which never alters; schema is the outward form which changes from time to time and from circumstance to circumstance.” (Barclay) “‘God’ has a form, and ‘Jesus Christ’ exists in this form of God.” (Lenski)* Morphe is a very difficult word to translate. When we think of the word form we apply it to the shape of something but the word Morphe does not convey that idea. The word is more the idea or an essence, it is the essential nature of God without implying a physical shape

or image. Thus the Greek word for ‘form’ refers to that outward expression which a person gives of his inmost nature.

“Did not consider it robbery to be equal with God” (KJV) Using the Greek meaning of this word robbery it gives the idea of something being grasped or clung to. Jesus did not cling to the prerogatives or privileges of deity. *“A treasure to be clutched and retained at all hazards.”* (Wuest)

Jesus did not need to try and achieve equality with God the Father because He already had equality. The Divine nature of Jesus was not something that He had to seek or acquire as it was His already. But this equality and Divine nature He had He chose not to cling to. In order to become as a man Jesus was willing to let go of some of the prerogatives of deity to become a man.

Verse 7

By setting aside His equality and Divine nature Jesus emptied Himself. We must be careful to realize that Jesus did not empty Himself of His deity in any way. Some students develop the kenotic theory of the incarnation of Jesus to the point they state that Jesus divested Himself of many of the attributes of deity. That He was no longer omniscience, omnipotence, omnipresence and even forfeited His own divine self-consciousness. Jesus did not become less God in the incarnation but added humanity to His nature. *“During his humiliation, as God and equal with the Father, was no encroachment on the Divine prerogative; for, as he had an equality of nature, he had an equality of rights.”* (Clarke) *“His condescension was free, and unconstrained with the consent of his Father . . . the Son of the Highest can, at his own pleasure, show or eclipse his own glorious brightness, abate or let out his fullness, exalt or abase himself in respect of us.”* (Poole) *“Even as a king, by laying aside the tokens of his royalty, and putting on the habit of a merchant, when all the while he ceases not to be a king, or the highest in his own dominions.”* (Poole)

Jesus emptied Himself into the form of a bondservant and not merely the form of a man. Remembering the word Morphe we are not talking about a physical shape but an inward nature that presents an outward expression. Jesus came to serve.

Jesus came in the likeness of men and further describes how He emptied Himself. The thought here is someone who is a servant but not in the likeness of a man. Angels are servants but not in the likeness of men. Looking at a fairy tale Aladdin’s Genie was a servant but not in the likeness of men. Likeness may be the outward form of something. Jesus did have the outward likeness of a man which reflected His humanity that was added to His deity. *“It was a likeness, but a real likeness, no mere phantom humanity as the Docetic Gnostics held.”* (Robertson)

Verse 8

The praise “in appearance as a man” is not a repetition of the last praise of verse 7. Paul here is shifting from a heavenly focus to an earthly one. We now see Paul describe Jesus not from a heavenly view but from the physical view which men see Him. Paul was saying that the outward appearance of Jesus was more than what men could see and that was His deity. Jesus humbled Himself when He came down from His throne in heaven. When

God sits on His throne in heaven there is no one He obeys. Jesus had to leave heavens glory and be found in the appearance of a man in order to become obedient. One key to the obedience of Jesus here in the world was the endurance of suffering. Suffering was only something He could learn by His experience after the incarnation. As we read in the Scripture from Hebrews, "Though He was a son, Yet He learned obedience by the things which He suffered. (Hebrews 5:8)

We must remember that Jesus was God in the flesh:

- He was humble in that he took the form of a man, and not a more glorious creature like an angel.
- He was humble in that He was born into an obscure, oppressed place.
- He was humble in that He was born into poverty, among a despised people.
- He was humble in that He was born as a child instead of appearing as a man.
- He was humble in submitting to the obedience of a child in a household.
- He was humble in learning and practicing a trade - and a humble trade of a builder.
- He was humble in the long wait until He launched out into public ministry.
- He was humble in the companions and disciples He chose.
- He was humble in the audience He appealed to and the way He taught.
- He was humble in the temptations He allowed and endured.
- He was humble in the weakness, hunger, thirst, and tiredness He endured.
- He was humble in His total obedience to His Heavenly Father.
- He was humble in His submission to the Holy Spirit.
- He was humble in choosing and submitting to the death of the cross.
- He was humble in the agony of His death.
- He was humble in the shame, mocking, and public humiliation of His death.
- He was humble in enduring the spiritual agony of His sacrifice on the cross.

We could imagine Jesus as the Son of God to pay the price of our sin and the sin of the world with His great humility. It could have been that He added the humility of a 33 year old man to His deity. Jesus might have taught man only what he needed to here while appearing in His transfigured glory. Jesus may have gone to a place of hiding and suffered

for the sins of man. Yet Jesus did not and humbled Himself for our salvation and His good work for us.

Because of His humility and obedience Jesus remained true to His Father's purpose to the point of death, even the death of the cross.

Crucifixion was a shameful death for a man to endure. So much that a Roman citizen was not permitted to be punished that way. Crucifixion was considered by the Jews to be an event which was cursed by God. (Deuteronomy 21:23 Galatians 3:13) *"The bottom rung in the ladder from the Throne of God. Jesus came all the way down to the most despised death of all, a condemned criminal on the accursed cross."* (Robertson) The death of Jesus on the Roman cross show that there is no limit to what God will do to show His love and saving power for man. *"What must sin have been in the sight of God, when it required such abasement in Jesus Christ to make an atonement for it, and undo its influence and malignity!"* (Clarke) *"The lower he stoops to save us, the higher we ought to lift him in our adoring reverence. Blessed be his name, he stoops, and stoops, and stoops, and, when he reaches our level, and becomes man, he still stoops, and stoops, and stoops lower and deeper yet."* (Spurgeon)

The Death of Jesus on the cross was a display of the power of Jesus. The past experience of Paul among the Philippians may have tempted them to think only of God's power as being expressed in exaltation and deliverance and not in glorifying God in humble service and endurance. Paul is providing the example that his current place of humble circumstance could still show glory and the power of God, just as Jesus did in His humility.

Verse 9

"Therefore God has highly exalted Him" serves as a title for the next three verses. These verses describe how God has exalted Jesus. In the translation "Highly Exalted" could be super exalted. "The Greek elegancy imports super exalted, or exalted with all exaltation." (Poole) *"Now, just pause over this thought - that Christ did not crown himself, but that his Father crowned him; that he did not elevate himself to the throne of majesty, but that his Father lifted him there, and placed him on his throne."* (Spurgeon)

God has given Jesus a name which is above every name which also means that Jesus has the Divine name Yahweh. The character and person of Jesus is above all others when we consider the Hebrew context of "the name." This verse is also a clear statement of the deity of Jesus, as there is no higher name than Yahweh, and Jesus has that name.

Verses 10-11

That every knee should bow means that Jesus is not only exalted by the Father but also by the whole world which is brought into submission to His name. *"Paul does not imply by this a universal salvation, but means that every personal being will ultimately confess Christ's lordship, either with joyful faith or with resentment and despair."* (Kent) By stating that those in heaven, and those on earth, and those beneath the earth conveys the absolute totality of God's creation. Paul injects the idea of the Prophet Isaiah. ***"I have sworn by Myself, The word has gone forth from My mouth in righteousness And will not turn back, That to Me every knee will bow, every tongue will***

swear allegiance." (Isaiah 45:23) Here in the words of Isaiah it is to Yahweh that all knees bow and tongues will confess. While here in Paul's letter to the Philippians it is to Jesus, showing that Jesus is Yahweh. *"Those under the earth." "Either the dead, who are hid in the earth, and shall be raised by the power of Christ . . . or, devils, and wicked souls."* (Poole) The totality of this recognition of Jesus' deity is an event that will happen after the final judgment. It is then that every creature in heaven and hell will be made to bow and confess that Jesus Christ is Lord.

It would be right to say that Jesus returned to heaven with more than He left with. Jesus returned with humanity added to His deity and He also returned with the recognition planted amongst the men with whom He was and the worship that He deserved. This was not fully known prior to His incarnation and the full revelation of His work and person. *"He has always (in Paul's view) shared in the Divine nature. But it is only as the result of His Incarnation, Atonement, Resurrection and Exaltation that He appears to men as on an equality with God, that He is worshipped by them in the way in which Jehovah is worshipped."* (Expositors) *"He might have used the miraculous powers inherent in His Divine nature in such a way as to compel men, without further ado, to worship Him as God. Instead of that He was willing to attain this high dignity by the path of humiliation, suffering and death."* (Expositors)

In the Roman Empire residents were required to swear an oath of allegiance to the Empire, stating the Caesar was Lord. They were also required to burn a pinch of incense to an image of the emperor. The Roman state only saw this as declaring political allegiance but the Christians interpreted it as idolatry and refused to participate. They often paid for this refusal with their lives. There was no doubt in Paul's mind who was Lord. It was not Caesar who Paul would stand before in trial. Caesar may have the high name now but it was not the name above all names. That name belongs to Jesus Christ only.

Paul did not give this description of Jesus for the theological education of the Philippians.

- He gave it to equip them to endure the hardship they were experienced.
 - He gave it help them to understand Paul's hardships.
 - He gave it to help them to practice real Christian unity in the midst of hard times.
1. This picture of Jesus has helped them to understand how to assess the ministry of Paul, which seemed weak at the present time.
 2. This picture helped them to understand the context of God's revelation of power - how God delights to show His power through humble actions.
 3. This picture has equipped them to act in a way towards each other that will promote unity in the body of Christ.
 4. This picture has shown them how to follow Jesus' pattern of patient, humble obedience - something Paul will call them to continue in the following verses.

Verse 12

As Jesus is the perfect example of the way for us to live our life, we should not miss the connection of His obedience to the Father and the obedience we should have towards Him. Paul here in this verse is showing his expectation that the Philippians as Christian followers of Jesus are expected to display obedience to the will of God.

Working out our own salvation is not a work based route to salvation. The meaning here is that the Christian is to work steadfastly in their growth into the image of Christ. It is a constant striving to reach spiritual maturity in the sanctification process that the Holy Spirit has begun in the Christian's life. This activity of the Christian involves every aspect of their daily lives to activate the salvation that God has freely given them. *"These words, as they stand in the New Testament, contain no exhortation to all men, but are directed to the people of God. They are not intended as an exhortation to the unconverted; they are, as we find them in the epistle, beyond all question addressed to those who are already saved through a living faith in the Lord Jesus Christ."* (Spurgeon)

Another point to consider is that our salvation is complete in the work that Jesus had done for the Christian. Still in us our salvation is not complete in that the work that we are doing is not yet complete. *"The believer must finish, must carry to conclusion, must apply to its fullest consequences what is already given by God in principle . . . He must work out what God in His grace has worked in."* (Muller) *"Some professors appear to have imbibed the notion that the grace of God is a kind of opium with which men may drug themselves into slumber, and their passion for strong doses of sleepy doctrine grows with that which it feeds on. "God works in us," say they, "therefore there is nothing for us to do." Bad reasoning, false conclusion. God works, says the text; therefore we must work out because God works in."* (Spurgeon) *"He exhorts as if he were an Arminian in addressing men. He prays as if he were a Calvinist in addressing God and feels no inconsistency in the two attitudes. Paul makes no attempt to reconcile divine sovereignty and human free agency, but boldly proclaims both."* (Robertson)

It is a problem that we are quicker to focus on the progress of others and neglect our own progression. Our living witness for Jesus Christ speaks louder than our words. We must work on our own salvation with more intent than that of others salvation. We must care about the salvation of others but we must work out our own salvation first. (Matthew 7:3)

Paul's intent here is not that we should live a life of a constant sense of fear and terror. But we should live with a fear of failing to work out our own salvation. This is not the fear and terror of hell and damnation. But it could also, and arguably should, be the righteous and reverent fear of God that every believer should have. It is not the trembling of a guilty sinner but the joyful trembling of being in the presence with the glory of God. The believer should strive to walk as faithfully out of the presence of fellow believers as he walks within the presence of fellow believers.

Verse 13

The reason that Christians must work out their own salvation with fear and trembling Paul explains, it is that God is working through the Christian. *"Grace all-sufficient dwells in you,*

believer. There is a living well within you springing up; use the bucket, then; keep on drawing; you will never exhaust it; there is a living source within.” (Spurgeon)

The thought is that since God has sacrificed so much for the Christian and is working through the Christian he has a greater responsibility to work diligently with fear and trembling regarding their salvation and walk with the Lord. The work that God is doing through the Christian increases the responsibility and in no way lessens it.

Those who are lazy and slothful towards their salvation are as the wicked servants that Jesus spoke of in Matthew 25:34-30. The true servants of the Lord acknowledge the sovereignty and omnipotence of God as a motivational tool for greater and more dedicated service to Him.

The work of God in the Christian transforms the will which changes the Christian to act on faith to do the will of God. The work of the Christian is not passive but an active transaction. The motive of God’s work in the life of the Christian is that it is for His good pleasure.

Verses 14-16

"Do all things without complaining and disputing." There is argument in the commentators over the meaning of this phrase. It could be in reference to the problems that the Philippians were having as mentioned in verses 2:1-4. Or it could be in reference to their attitude towards God. It may be that the Philippians resented God because of their present conflict mentioned in 1:27-30.

Here Paul has used the same terms that were used to describe Israel’s complaining in the book of Exodus. The interpretation may be best understood as including the Philippians attitude towards God. Charles Spurgeon gives us three examples of things that Christians must not murmur against.

- The Providence of God.
- One another.
- The ungodly world.

But the emphasis of this command falls on the words “all things.” *“Dispute not with God; let him do what seemeth him good. Dispute not with your fellow Christians, raise not railing accusations against them. When Calvin was told that Luther had spoken ill of him, he said, ‘Let Luther call me devil if he please, I will never say of him but that he is a most dear and valiant servant of the Lord.’ Raise not intricate and knotty points by way of controversy.” (Spurgeon)*

The Christians shows himself to be a true follower of Christ by not having a complaining spirit. Harmless is the same word used in Matthew 10:16 and translates as justified or innocent. *“Be ye blameless and harmless,” says the apostle. The Greek word might be translated ‘hornless,’ as if ye were to be creatures not only that do no harm, but could not do any; like sheep that not only will not devour, but cannot devour, for it were contrary to*

their nature; for they have no teeth with which to bite, no fangs with which to sting, no poison with which to slay.” (Spurgeon)

Referring back to Deuteronomy we see this same definition. ***“They have acted corruptly toward Him, They are not His children, because of their defect; But are a perverse and crooked generation.”*** (Deuteronomy 32:5) Paul may have used this as to tell the Philippians not to be as the children of Israel during the days in the wilderness. Today we are in the wilderness of this world sojourning to the Promised Land of our heavenly home.

Paul is not encouraging the Philippians by saying they are to be “as lights in the world.” For the Christian this is a statement of fact. Christians are the “lights of the word.” The question is how bright does the Christians light shine? *“Not lights merely, but luminaries, heavenly bodies. But this can hardly be satisfactorily given in an English version.”* (Alford)

As lights in the world the Christian is to fulfill a certain role.

- Lights are used to make things evident.
- Lights are used to guide.
- Lights are used as a warning.
- Lights are used to bring cheer.
- Lights are used to make things safe.

Paul knew that the Christian is in a hostile and dark place. There is no excuse for the Christian light to not shine. It is ever more important that in the darkness the Christian light is to shine. The darkness should give the Christian more incentive to shine brightly.

Holding fast translates better to holding forth. Both meanings fast and forth are true. It may be that Paul had a dual sense in using this word. We hold fast gives a sense of being strong and holding forth is the offer we have of the word of Life. *“It is not so much the conduct of the Philippians that justifies the assertion that they shine as luminaries, it is their having life’s Word. This Word makes them luminaries irrespective of what the world judges about it and about those who have it.”* (Lenski)

Paul encourages the previous behaviors so that his work would not be in vain. This possibility was a troubling thought for Paul. Paul’s ministry abided in the people that he ministered to. If they did not remain strong in the faith there was a sense that his ministry would be in vain.

Paul looked forward to the Day of Christ where he would be able to see if his life’s work was fruitful. This would only be assured if the people that Paul had ministered to would continue to walk with the Lord. Paul demonstrated the true heart of a shepherd. His burdens were for the flock that he was tending and not so much for the burdens that he

was carrying. Paul was not just content with the relationship that he had with the Lord but longed also to see others walk with the Lord as he.

Verses 17-18

The allusion Paul here uses is a practice of both the Jews and the pagans. They would pour wine and sometimes perfume either beside as the Jews or upon an animal as the pagans that was sacrificed to God or the pagan god. The drink offering was accompanied by another sacrifice and we see it mentioned in Numbers 15:4-5 and Numbers 28:7. In the grammar of this phrase “I am being poured out” is in the present tense. Paul may mean his present service to the Philippians or his present condition at the Roman prison. Also it may be an indication of the possibility of his execution by the Romans.

In this verse the word service means “*Service to God or His cause . . . any priestly action or sacred performance.*” (Muller) Thereby connecting the meanings of Priestly service and sacrifice it become more precious. The words sacrifice and service are connected with the faith of the Philippians. It may be understandable to see the Philippians as priest and the sacrifice their faith and Paul enriched that work by the drink offering of his possible martyrdom.

In the event of Paul’s martyrdom Paul expected the Philippians to rejoice with him. It was not that Paul was being morbid in asking them to rejoice in the depression of his death but to rejoice because his death would bring glory to God. Paul’s life was a sacrifice for Jesus Christ either in life or death. In this truth Paul took gladness and joy and he wanted the Philippians to adopt the same attitude. Joy is a consistent theme in the Letter to the Philippians. But this joy is not based upon circumstances but the life of total commitment to Jesus Christ.

Verses 19-22

Paul shows that his heart was in true reliance upon the Lord. He wished to send Timothy to the Philippian Church to aid them in their spiritual growth but he knew that it was according to God’s will and timing and not his.

Paul was not expecting problems with the Church in Philippi as he believed they were strong in their faithfulness to the Lord. Instead he felt that he himself would be encouraged by the news of their activities. Compare this to the second letter that Paul wrote to the Corinthian Church. At the time that Paul wrote his second letter to that Church they were having worse problems than the Philippians Church was experiencing.

Paul was not just sending someone to look in to the Church but he was sending the best person that he could send in Timothy. Timothy was a man who had a pastor’s heart and cared more for the sheep of the Church than he did for himself. In comparison to others that Paul knew Timothy had a rare heart for the ministry. Others that Paul could have sent were seeking their own thing and not the things which are of Jesus Christ.

Verses 23-24

Paul of course did not know the outcome of his imprisonment in Rome. He wanted to send Timothy as soon as he could but first wanted to know his status. Paul also wanted to express that his trust was in the Lord and that he too wanted to come and visit the Church in Philippi. He did not want the believers to think otherwise by sending Timothy as a substitute only for himself. So Paul clearly states that he truly wanted to come to the Church in Philippi.

Verses 25-26

Epaphroditus was sent to Paul in Rome from the Church in Philippi to bring a gift and to assist him. It is quite probable that the letter to the Philippian Church was carried back to them by Epaphroditus. Unfortunately Epaphroditus had become very ill while in Rome. Paul wanted the Church in Philippi to know that Epaphroditus had been a good assistant to Paul.

Paul, therefore, identifies Epaphroditus as “My brother, fellow worker, and fellow soldier. A good partner in the work that Paul valued highly. Paul list three special relationships that he and Epaphroditus has together. Paul speaks of him as a brother, a relationship that was enjoyed. Paul titles him a fellow worker in the job that must be done meaning that he was equal in the task. And Paul calls Epaphroditus a fellow soldier. Being a fellow soldier means that Epaphroditus was equal in the battles they together fought.

Epaphroditus is called a messenger which translates to the word apostle and mean sent. He was not an apostle of Christ, as Paul was, but an apostle from the Philippian Church. Paul also said that Epaphroditus was a good minister unto him. In other words Epaphroditus sacrificed himself in the work with Paul.

As before mentioned Epaphroditus had become sick while with Paul in Rome and was concerned that the Church in Philippi had heard of his illness. Paul did not want the Philippians to become overly concerned and felt that if Epaphroditus returned to them the members of the Church would have a greater peace of mind about him. Also Epaphroditus was longing to return to the Church in Philippi and be with those who he had left.

Verse 27

It was no small thing the illness of Epaphroditus as it was near fatal. Yet Paul expresses that God had mercy and Epaphroditus had recovered and was able to make the trip back to Philippi. There is nothing in the Scripture to show a miraculous healing had occurred yet Paul still saw God’s hand of mercy upon him.

The mercy that God had given to Epaphroditus was also a mercy given to Paul. Paul expresses that if Epaphroditus had died Paul would have had sorrow upon sorrow. It was not only that Epaphroditus would no longer be at Paul’s side in the ministry but that it would have happened when Epaphroditus had come to minister to the needs of Paul and that Paul was in prison.

Verses 28-30

Paul wanted to get Epaphroditus home to the Philippians as they were distressed by the news they had heard of his sickness. He also wanted them to give Epaphroditus the honor that he deserved for his sacrificial effort. Paul wanted to dispel any thoughts that some may have had and that Epaphroditus did not fail in his duty to assist Paul in the work. In spite of his illness Epaphroditus served Paul well and above the call of duty.

The work that Epaphroditus did was that of a messenger and not necessarily as a spiritual worker still it was needed work for Jesus Christ and it brought him close to death.

Epaphroditus displayed the heart of a minister in that he put his own personal safety second behind the work for the Lord Jesus Christ. The phrase “not regarding his life” gives the thought of going on the roll of the dice. Paul’s point was that for the sake of Jesus Christ Epaphroditus was willing to gamble everything. During the time of the early Church there was an association of men and women that were called the gamblers. They were the ones who would visit the prisoners and tend to the sick. Especially those who were sick with infectious diseases. Often people in that condition were left to die and then their bodies were tossed into the streets. The gamblers would bury the dead and help the sick as best they could at a risk to their own lives. They did this to show the love of Jesus towards one another. *“It seems plain from this expression that Epaphroditus’ illness was the consequence not of persecution but of over-exertion.”* (Lightfoot)

"To supply what was lacking in your service toward me." Epaphroditus brought the support from the Philippians that was lacking in their support of Paul’s ministry. Until Epaphroditus arrived all Paul knew was there good intention to help but Epaphroditus brought their intentions into reality.

Chapter 3

Christian Joy

In the letter to a persecuted Church, Paul urges Christians to be filled with joy, (Philippians 3:1 Philippians 4:4) just as he does the persecuted Thessalonian believers “always be joyful.” (1 Thessalonians 5:16) In the last hours of his life, Jesus also desired that His disciples “be filled with His joy. (John 15:11 John 16:24)

Superficial happiness is dependent on circumstances. Christian joy is clearly different; it is rooted in a person’s relationship with the Lord, and it is resilient even in the midst of suffering and death. Joy comes in knowing that whatever happens, God will use everything for our ultimate good. (Romans 5:3-4 Romans 8:28) Believers also have joy from the dynamic presence of God’s Spirit in their hearts. (Galatians 5:22) The real secret to a joyful life is being continuously “filled with the Holy Spirit.” (Ephesians 5:18) The life and attitude of believers are not defined by outward circumstances. But by their relationship with the living God.

Verses 1-2

Paul's use of the word "Finally" did not mean that Paul was concluding the letter but that it is a short transition in the letter. *"Paul's 'finally' here is not the 'finally' of the present day preacher. He has another 'finally' in 4:8. He does not mean by this that he is about to close the letter. The words translated by the word 'finally' are literally 'as for the rest.'"* (Wuest)

A fitting theme for the whole letter is "Rejoice in the Lord." Paul has been teaching that the Philippians should rejoice in the Lord through all circumstances and situations. It is the Lord who works all circumstances and situations together for the good for those who love Him. (Romans 8:28) The believer finds abiding joy when he truly places his trust in God who is in control. When the believer lives in this belief it is not any surprise that he is filled with joy. Rejoice in the Lord: *"The entire phrase may be the Christian equivalent of the Old Testament exclamation, Hallelujah."* (Martin) The Christian must strive to avoid the tendency to murmur and complain. There is no fault in God's dealings and we should not seek sympathy in our situations. *"It is a duty for us to cultivate this joy. We must steadfastly arrest any tendency to murmur and complain; to find fault with God's dealings; or to seek to elicit sympathy. We must as much resist the temptation to depression and melancholy as we would to any form of sin."* (Meyer)

Paul does not mind repeating things he has already said because it is good to internalize the teaching of the Lord. The Christian life is not a life without danger. Paul was passionate about warning the believers of these dangers. *"This outburst is very remarkable, for its vehemence is so unlike the tone of the rest of the letter. That is calm, joyous, bright, but this is stormy and impassioned, full of flashing and scathing words."* (Maclaren)

By using "dogs" Paul is making reference in a harsh way to the trouble making legalists who would try to deceive the Philippians. The use of the word "dogs" is the same term of contempt the Jews used against the Gentiles. This term was probably a strong point against the legalistic Jews. *"The herds of dogs which prowl about Eastern cities, without a home and without an owner, feeding on the refuse and filth of the streets, quarreling among themselves, and attacking the passer-by, explain the applications of the image."* (Lightfoot) *"We are bidden, therefore, to beware of men of a quarrelsome and contentious spirit, who under the guise of religion hide impure and unclean things; and who are not only defiled, but defiling in their influence."* (Meyer)

Paul is saying that the legalists are evil doers are by placing an emphasis on righteousness with God based upon works. *"These people are the 'Cranks' of our Churches; they introduce fads and hobbies; they exaggerate the importance of trifles; they catch up ever new theory and vagary, and follow it to the detriment of truth and love."* (Meyer)

Paul is making reference here to the requirement of the Jewish legalist that the Gentile has to be circumcised if they wanted to be Christians. Paul calls this mutilation. The inside

belief of the Jews legalistic was that one would have to become a Jew first before they could be a Christian. *“They did not deny that Jesus was the Messiah, or that His Gospel was the power of God unto salvation, but they insisted that the Gentile converts could only come to the fullness of Gospel privilege through the Law of Moses.”* (Meyer) Paul was not being flippant by calling it mutilation. *“I will not call them the circumcision, they have not been circumcised, they have only been gashed and mutilated, it has been a mere fleshly maiming.”* (Maclaren) By a pun, he mockingly calls it a mere cutting, katatome, i.e. mutilation of the body on a par with pagan practices forbidden in Leviticus 21:5.

Verses 3-4

There were three things that the Jews placed their confidence in towards their faith. One was being circumcised, two was being descendants of Abraham, and the last was their external ceremonies and duties under the Mosaic Law – but these things cannot save a soul. The Israelites were told to circumcise their hearts in Deuteronomy 10:16. As an outward sign they were to cut away the foreskin. Paul claims here that he and the believers in Jesus Christ were the true circumcised.

In the New Testament times the truly circumcised were the ones who worshiped God in the Spirit, as opposed to the fleshly and external worship emphasized by these legalists. *“The word ‘worship’ is the translation of the Greek word referring to the service of Jehovah by His peculiar people, the Jews. A Jew would be scandalized by the application of this word to a Gentile.”* (Wuest)

A characteristic of the truly circumcised is their joy in Christ. Their joy is not found in their own ability to be justified by the law or in their law obedience. Their joy comes from Jesus and Jesus alone.

Another characteristic of the truly circumcised is they have no confidence in their own ability to live a righteous life before God in the external works of their flesh. Their only confidence can be found in Jesus.

Paul believed that he had more qualified himself to the keeping of the law than anyone. Often those who profess confidence in their works in the flesh are the ones who are least qualified to have such confidence. ***“These are matters which have, to be sure, the appearance of wisdom in self-made religion and self-abasement and severe treatment of the body, but are of no value against fleshly indulgence.”*** (Colossians 2:23)

Verses 5-6

Paul list seven things that he possessed at birth that were reasons that he might have confidence in the flesh.

- Paul was circumcised the eighth day in accordance with Leviticus 12:3.
- Paul was of the stock of Israel, a descendant of Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob; and therefore an heir to God’s covenant with them.

- Paul was of the tribe of Benjamin, a distinguished tribe. Benjamin was distinguished by the fact that it gave Israel her first king, Saul (1 Samuel 9:1-2). It was the tribe that aligned itself with faithful Judah when Israel divided into two nations at the time of Rehoboam (1 Kings 12:21). It was also the tribe that had the city of Jerusalem within its boundaries (Judges 1:21).
- Paul was a Hebrew of the Hebrews. This contrasted him with the Jews who embraced Greek culture as it spread through the Mediterranean. In that time, many Jews became ashamed of their Jewishness and tried to live and act as much like Greeks as they could, sometimes even to the point of having their circumcision cosmetically restored or hidden so they could enjoy the Roman public baths without being noticed as Jews. In contrast, Paul was raised by his parents as a Hebrew of the Hebrews.
- Paul was concerning the law, a Pharisee. This tells us that among an elite people (the Jews), Paul was of an elite sect (the Pharisees), who were noted for their scrupulous devotion to the law of God. “There were not very many Pharisees, never more than six thousand, but they were the spiritual athletes of Judaism. Their very name means The Separated Ones. They had separated themselves off from all common life and from all common tasks in order to make it the one aim of their lives to keep every smallest detail of the Law.” (Barclay) The concern that Pharisees had for keeping the law is reflected in passages like Matthew 23:23.
- Concerning zeal, persecuting the church. Paul was not merely an intellectual opponent of perceived heresies against Judaism; he was also an active fighter against them - even in his blindness to God. Paul’s observation that the Jews of his day have a zeal for God, but not according to knowledge (Romans 10:2) was true of his own life before God confronted him on the road to Damascus.
- Concerning the righteousness which is in the law, blameless. This shows that Paul achieved the standard of righteousness which was accepted among the men of his day - though this standard fell short of God’s holy standard. Because of how the law was interpreted and taught, there were those of that day who were deceived into thinking that they really were blameless, like the rich young ruler (Luke 18:18-23).

Paul like all of us falls short of the glory of God but if anyone could lay claim to coming near to law-keeping and the works of the flesh it would be Paul. Paul was certainly more qualified than his legalizing opponents to make that claim.

Verse 7

The terms gain and loss are accounting terms. Paul is saying that all his deeds in the flesh he has placed in the loss column. The corrupted teachers that Paul had warned the Philippians of would have been proud to have the pedigree of Paul. Yet Paul here has made it clear that he has counted them as loss for the sake of Christ. *“The word ‘gain’ is plural in the Greek, namely, ‘gains.’ . . . ‘Loss’ is singular. The various gains are all counted as one loss.”* (Wuest) *“He was skilled in spiritual arithmetic, and very careful in*

his reckoning. He cast up his accounts with caution, and observed with a diligent eye his losses and his gains.” (Spurgeon)

Paul chose to count these things as a loss. It was not that by their character they were a loss but he did not see them as any value to his salvation. Before Paul's conversion to the Christian faith he saw the works in the flesh as pleasing to God. Paul's attitude was not changed to the attitude that Jesus described in the parable of the pearl. (Matthew 13:44-46)

Verse 8

Paul not only counted his pedigree as loss but counted all things as loss. In view of the excellence of Jesus Christ all that we can do finds no comparison. It is not that the good we do isn't credible or worthless but in comparison to the perfect work of the Lord in His greatness and excellence they are really nothing. The greatest advantage to our life is a personal relationship with our Lord Jesus Christ. Jesus should and must be at the very center of our lives. In verse 7 Paul said he counted. Here he means that he counted the cost of his repentance of his old way of life before conversion. In verses 8 Paul has also counted all the suffering he has experienced for the sake of his Lord as worthy for the sake of following Jesus. *“After twenty years or more of experience Paul had an opportunity of revising his balance-sheet, and looking again at his estimates, and seeing whether or not his counting was correct. What was the issue of his latest search? How do matters stand at his last stocktaking? He exclaims with very special emphasis, ‘Yea doubtless; and I count all things but loss for the Excellency of the knowledge of Christ Jesus my Lord.’” (Spurgeon)*

Paul expressed the loss of all things for the sake of Christ. It was not just a spiritual exercise but also a physical loss also. Over the thirty years from the beginning of his ministry until now Paul had suffer much loss but for Paul to gain Christ was more than worth the cost. It is a demonstration that in the writing of this letter Paul was in a Roman prison where he was suffering the loss of all things.

The word rubbish or garbage translates to excrement as dung. Paul considered the losses not only as dung but also as offensive as dung. The ancient Greek word for rubbish had one of two uses. It could describe excrement from the body, or table scraps that were fit only to be thrown to the dogs. We may suppose that Paul would be comfortable with either meaning in this context. *“The word means the vilest dross or refuse of anything; the worst excrement. The word shows how utterly insignificant and unavailing, in point of salvation, the apostle esteemed everything but the Gospel of Jesus.” (Clarke)*

Verse 9

Paul was in Christ, he was abiding in the “I AM the vine.” Therefore, Paul was not reliant upon his own self-made righteousness but the righteousness that is from God by faith. The foundation of Paul's life was in what Jesus had done for him and not in anything that Paul had done, will do, or would do for Jesus Christ.

Paul's past relationship with God was a legal relationship which was unable to save. This was the relationship that the Jews of the day were maintaining through the Law of Moses. Here Paul is stating the difference between the two in that the perfect connection to God is through a personal connection with Jesus Christ. The difference is living in trusting on your own righteousness and trusting in the righteousness of God given to us by our faith in His Son Jesus Christ. *"He disowns his own righteousness as eagerly as other men disown their sins, and he highly esteems the righteousness which Christ has wrought out for us, which becomes ours by faith."* (Spurgeon)

Verses 10-11

Those of the legalist had to rely upon themselves to find some kind of peace with God. But the performance of man and his focus will fall way short of the glory of God. Paul had faith in Jesus and did not rely upon himself. To know Jesus is not a historical knowledge of Him, nor knowing the correct doctrines regarding Jesus, it is not just knowing His moral ethic, and it is not knowing the great work of Jesus on our behalf.

- We can say that we know someone because we recognize them; because we can distinguish what is different about them compared to other people.
- We can say that we know someone because we are acquainted with what they do; we know the baker because we get our bread from him.
- We can say that we know someone because we actually converse with them; we are on speaking terms with that person.
- We can say that we know someone because we spend time in their house and with their family.
- We can say that we know someone because we have committed our life to them and live with them every day, sharing every circumstance as in a marriage.
- Yet beyond all this, there is a way of know Jesus Christ that includes all of these yet goes beyond them.

"They tell me he is a refiner that he cleanses from spots; he has washed me in his precious blood, and to that extent I know him. They tell me that he clothes the naked; he bath covered me with a garment of righteousness, and to that extent I know him. They tell me that he is a breaker, and that he breaks fetters, he has set my soul at liberty, and therefore I know him. They tell me that he is a king and that he reigns over sin; he bath subdued my enemies beneath his feet, and I know him in that character. They tell me he is a shepherd: I know him for I am his sheep. They say he is a door: I have entered in through him, and I know him as a door. They say he is food: my spirit feeds on him as on the bread of heaven, and, therefore, I know him as such." (Spurgeon)

Knowing Jesus is to know the power of His resurrection. This power is imparted to us now and not just when we die. *"He wants to know in an experiential way the power of Christ's resurrection. That is, he wants us to experience the same power that raised Christ from the dead surging through his own being, overcoming sin in his life and producing the Christian graces."* (Wuest)

It is not so much the power of Jesus' resurrection but the power we have as a result of His resurrection. This is the power that Paul wanted to apprehend and to know.

- The power of His resurrection is an evidencing power. It is the evidence and seal that everything Jesus did and said was true.
- The power of His resurrection is a justifying power. It is the receipt and proof that the sacrifice of the cross was accepted as payment in full.
- The power of His resurrection is a life-giving power. It means that those who are connected with Jesus Christ receive the same resurrection life.
- The power of His resurrection is a consoling and comforting power. It promises that our friends and loved ones who are dead in Christ live with Him.

Our fellowship with Jesus means that we also must share in the fellowship with His sufferings. Suffering is a part of our Christian heritage by being a Child of God. ***"And if children, heirs also, heirs of God and fellow heirs with Christ, if indeed we suffer with Him so that we may also be glorified with Him."*** (Romans 8:17)

Our fellowship with Jesus also means that we are also partakers in His death. It is a part of our reasonable service to Him to remain faithful to the point of death. At this writing of Paul it was very relevant to him as he faced possible martyrdom.

Paul was not focused of suffering and death as a way of the Christian life. They were only the necessary road to the goal of a resurrected life now and ultimately resurrection from the dead. The goal of resurrection from the dead was worth any means to Paul and us. There was no question in Paul's mind that he was saved but Paul longed for the completion of his salvation, which is the resurrection body. Paul had suffered much during his ministry for Christ. To Paul this was not some theological theory or loose ideas. This was the life that Paul had lived in his connection with God.

Verses 12-14

Though Paul was an Apostle of Jesus Christ and had obtained great spiritual maturity he in no way he had obtained near perfection. We see many Christian leaders who cultivate the attitude that they have reached that goal of superior spiritual maturity. Without saying in words they put forth the image that they have constant triumph leading people to believe they have reached perfection. *"Brethren, it is a very healthy thing for us who are ministers to read a biography like that of McChesney. Read that through, if you are a minister, and it will burst many of your windbags. You will find yourselves collapse most terribly. Take the life of Brainerd amongst the Indians, or of Baxter in our own land. Think of the holiness of George Herbert, the devoutness of Fletcher, or the zeal of Whitfield. Where do you find yourself after reading their lives? Might you not peep about to find a hiding-place for your insignificance?"* (Spurgeon) *"Just as a little child is a perfect human being, but still is far from perfect in all his development as man, so the true child of God is also perfect in all parts, although not yet perfect in all the stages of his development in faith."* (Muller) *"But while the work of Christ for us is perfect, and it were presumption to*

think of adding to it, the work of the Holy Spirit in us is not perfect, it is continually carried on from day to day, and will need to be continued throughout the whole of our lives.” (Spurgeon)

Paul knew that he had not yet arrived and that left him but one option, he had to press on. (Luke 9:62) For Paul there was no turning back. When Spain led the world (in the 15th century), their coins reflected their national arrogance and were inscribed Ne Plus Ultra which meant “Nothing Further” - meaning that Spain was the ultimate in all the world. After the discovery of the New World, they realized that they were not the end of the world, so they changed the inscription on their coinage to Plus Ultra meaning “More Beyond.” In the same pattern, some Christian lives say, “Nothing Further” and others say “More Beyond.” For Paul to press on displayed his child-like faith. Little children can’t wait to become bigger and they always want to become more mature.

Paul pressed on because of his desire to serve Jesus. All Paul’s effort was to do the will of God and not his own. *“That I may lay hold,” he used strong language. “The word ‘apprehend’ is from the same Greek word translated ‘attained,’ but with a preposition prefixed which means in its local force ‘down.’ He wants to catch hold of it and pull it down, like a football player who not only wants to catch his man, but wants to pull him down and make him his own.”* (Wuest)

The verse began with the idea that Christ had laid hold of Paul. To many Christians react to this idea in a passive manner. They think that Jesus has laid hold of them to that is it, I am a Christian and I am going to heaven. Paul’s attitude was different in that he wanted to take hold of the reason that Jesus had laid hold of him. Let us look at the why of Jesus laying hold of someone.

- Jesus laid hold of Paul to make him a new man (Romans 6:4) - so Paul laid hold of that and wanted to see the converting work of Jesus completely carried out in himself.
- Jesus laid hold of Paul to conform him into the image of Jesus Christ (Romans 8:29) - so Paul laid hold of that and wanted to see the nature of Jesus within himself.
- Jesus laid hold of Paul to make him a witness (Acts 9:15) - so Paul laid hold of both the experience of Jesus and to testify of that experience.
- Jesus laid hold of Paul that he might attain to the resurrection of the dead (Philippians 3:11) - so Paul laid hold of that heavenly hope.

The upward call of God is the focus of our good work for His Kingdom. This was the focus of Paul in that he labored for the prize and remained undistracted from it. Paul continued to press on towards the prize of reaching home to be with His Lord. Paul would not let the things of the past distract him from the onward journey towards the future. Often we let the good and bad things of the past prohibit us from moving forward and allowing them to keep us from that which God has for us in the future. Neither can we allow the deception of the past or the future keep us from living in the present. God wants us to press on in

the present, it is in the present that eternity touches us now. The race that we are running can only be won in the present moment, not in the past or in the future.

It is not the benefits that come from achieving the call or anything else that is the prize. The prize is the call itself. What if God did not call? Where would we go and where would we be? The prize is that God called us to run the race and that He is a partner with us in that race. *“It is a high calling because it comes from above, from God; the conception of it has emanated from His heart. It is a high calling because it is worthy of God. It is a high calling because it is so much above the ideals of men. . . . And then this is a high calling because it summons us to where Christ sits at the right hand of God.”* (Meyer) *“The Greek word points out the strong exertions made in the race; every muscle and never is exerted, and he puts forth every particle of his strength in running. He was running for life, and running for his life.”* (Clarke)

The upward call is only found in Jesus Christ. Those who follow a work based faith may think that they are achieving the upward call but they are only doing so in the efforts of their own flesh. There is no effort in the flesh that can save a man. We can only accomplish the work of the Kingdom through abiding in the vine of Christ. ***“I am the vine, you are the branches; he who abides in Me and I in him, he bears much fruit, for apart from Me you can do nothing.”*** (John 15:5)

Verses 15-16

Those who have reached a higher degree of spiritual maturity should have a like mindedness. If some should lack understanding Paul trusted that God would reveal that to them. Paul trusted that the Lord would fully deal and correct His people of any error in their thinking. Paul knew that he had failed to bring them into complete understanding that God would eventually accomplish this work. Nevertheless the Christian is to apply the understanding that he has and follow the order that God has set before them. A complete lack of understanding is not an excuse to not follow what they knew to be the will of the Lord. What we do not know can never be an excuse to disobey that which we do know.

Each Christian should have enough light to follow in the same path with other Christians with the same spiritual mind. The followers of Christ are to a unified force of truth giving a discernment of the error of legalistic thinking. ***“Therefore if there is any encouragement in Christ, if there is any consolation of love, if there is any fellowship of the Spirit, if any affection and compassion, make my joy complete by being of the same mind, maintaining the same love, united in spirit, intent on one purpose.”*** (Philippians 2:1-2) The Philippian Church did not have the same problem as the Corinthian Church, a problem with carnality. (1 Corinthians 3:1-4) Their danger came from pressure from outside and from within. Paul was trying to make sure that this pressure did not separate them but brought them together.

Verses 17

Paul was not being egotistical or arrogant here in this passage. Paul knew that he was not sinless nor was he a perfect example. But Paul was engaged in a pursuit of living a Christ like life and therefore was a good example to follow. His statement here was to imitate him as he was imitating Christ. (1 Corinthians 11:1) Paul was a solid example of how to live for Christ. There are those who are hypocritical in saying do as I do but not as I do. Paul walked the talk.

Paul was not so filled with self-pride as to think that he was the only example they could follow. Paul told the Philippians to take note of those who also showed a good example. Perhaps he was thinking of Timothy or Epaphroditus whom they knew well as he was a member of their Church.

Verses 18-19

Paul expresses his sadness that many walk contrary to his teaching and regards them as enemies of the cross of Jesus. In Paul's letters to the Corinthians and the Romans he had also dealt with these problems. These were to ones that believed that salvation came without repentance and conversion. They believed that as long as your soul was saved it did not matter what you did in the flesh. A person who is an enemy of the cross is not a physical enemy but an enemy because of their opposition to the Scriptural truth of the atonement of Jesus that was made for us upon the cross. And also its ongoing power and effect in our life. They were enemies of the cross because they did not want to take of the cross of self-denial and follow Jesus. ***"Then Jesus said to His disciples, "If anyone wishes to come after Me, he must deny himself, and take up his cross and follow Me. "For whoever wishes to save his life will lose it; but whoever loses his life for My sake will find it."*** (Matthew 16:24-25)

Paul's weeping may be the result of their disregard for God's holiness. Thus giving ammunition to the legalist's accusations that Paul preached a cheap grace that required no commitment of the life. Spurgeon gives three reasons that Paul wept. *"First, on account of the guilt of these enemies of the cross of Christ. Second, on account of the ill effects of their conduct. Finally, on account of their doom."* *"I never read that the apostle wept when he was persecuted Though they ploughed his back with furrows, I do believe that never a tear was seen to gush from his eye while the soldiers scourged him. Though he was cast into prison, we read of his singing, never of his groaning. I do not believe he ever wept on account of any sufferings or dangers to which he himself was exposed for Christ's sake. I call this an extraordinary sorrow, because the man who wept was no soft piece of sentiment, and seldom shed a tear even under grievous trials."* (Spurgeon) *"Professors of religion, who get into the church, and yet lead ungodly lives, are the worst enemies that the cross of Christ has. These are the sort of men who bring tears into the minister's eyes; these are they who break his heart; they are the enemies of the cross of Christ."* (Spurgeon)

The end of destruction could be in their present life but more likely was their ultimate damnation. Their appetite has a broader reference to sensual indulgence. They are the

ones who live for the pleasures of life in body, mind, and soul. Where glory become shame is in the twisted truth that so many of the world are caught in. They glory over things that should bring them shame. Their minds being set of earthly things shows where their focus is. They were not trying to please God but were living for the world. This is the same attitude of the Rich Young Ruler in Luke 12:16-21.

The enemies of the cross could also have been the Judaizers who prided themselves on being workers of righteousness. Yet Paul described their work as evil, since any attempt to please God by one's own efforts and draw attention away from Christ's accomplished redemption is the worst kind of wickedness. It may also be the Gentile libertines – precursors of Gnosticism, who maintained a dualistic philosophy that tended toward antinomianism, which is a discarding of any moral law.

Verse 20

The Philippians were Roman citizens and lived under Roman law and customs. Paul is now reminding them they were citizens of the Kingdom of Heaven and must live under God's law as well. Another paraphrase of heavenly citizenship is this: *"We have our home in heaven, and here on earth we are a colony of heaven's citizens."* Paul is saying: *"Just as the Roman colonists never forgot that they belong to Rome, you must never forget that you are citizens of heaven; and your conduct must match your citizenship."* (Barclay)

As citizens of Heaven we are aliens here on earth. We can tell when someone is a foreigner as they are distinct in their culture attributes. As Christians we must also be distinct in the character attributes of one who is a citizen of Heaven.

- Aliens should seek to do good works in the land they sojourn in.
- Aliens should not seek to interfere in the affairs of the land they sojourn in.
- Aliens have privileges as well as duties; they are not under the same obligations as citizens of the land they sojourn in.
- Aliens are not eligible for the same rewards and recognitions as the citizens of the land that they sojourn in.
- Aliens should not focus on building riches in the land they sojourn in.

As citizens of Heaven we should display these special character traits.

- As citizens we are under the government of heaven.
- As citizens we share in heaven's honors.
- As citizens we have property rights in heaven.
- As citizens we enjoy the pleasures of heaven.
- As citizens of heaven we love heaven and feel attached there.
- As citizens of heaven we keep in communication with our native home.

"How heartily the Germans sing of the dear old fatherland; but they cannot, with all their Germanic patriotism, they cannot beat the genial glow of the Briton's heart, when he thinks of his fatherland too. The Scotchman, too, wherever he may be, remembers the land of 'brown heath and shaggy wood.' And the Irishman, too, let him be where he will,

still thinks the 'Emerald Isle' the first gem of the sea. It is right that the patriot should love his country. Does not our love fervently flame towards heaven?" (Spurgeon)

I remember how my family and I eagerly waited for the governor to come to our home town. As the time drew near so did the excitement of his arrival. Christians should also experience that same eagerness as the time draws near for the arrival of our Lord and Savior.

In 48 BC Julius Caesar was given the title "the universal savior of mankind." It then became the common title for the ruling Caesar. The title of lord was also given to the Caesar. Not long after the time of Paul the Christians were martyred for refusing to address the Caesar as Lord. They boldly claimed that only Jesus was Lord.

Verse 21

Our Lord and Savior will do something that no Caesar can do. When we are resurrected we will have the same glorified body that Jesus has now. The body of Jesus was not resuscitated from a dead body but was given a new resurrected body. It was patterned after the old body but was new and fitted for heaven.

Jesus is able to subdue all things because the God we serve is omnipotent. God is able to subdue all things unto Himself. He is able to accomplish something as amazing as the resurrection. As Christians we will be resurrected in our bodies patterned after the pattern of Jesus. *"There may be sins within your heart that have long resisted control. Do with them as you will, they still defy you. . . . But if you will hand over the conflict to Jesus, He will subdue them; He will bring them under his strong, subjecting hand. Be of good cheer. What you cannot do, He can."* (Meyer)

Chapter 4

Verse 1

Paul begins this final chapter of his letter to the Philippian Church by connecting his final remarks to the resurrection of the Lord Jesus Christ with the word therefore. Because of their promise of the resurrection they had all the more reason to stand fast in the Lord.

In many of Paul's writing he used the comparison of staying in the Christian faith as a race in which we are to put off the things that hinder our walk, sin, and to press on to the victory found in Jesus Christ. Here Paul uses the word crown which describe the crown given to the athlete who has won the race. This usually was a laurel wreath and not the crown that was worn by a king. Paul was urging them to stand fast in that they would become his trophy.

As a Christian we can only stand fast when we are in the Lord. ***"I am the vine, you are the branches; he who abides in Me and I in him, he bears much fruit, for apart from Me you can do nothing."*** (John 15:5) If we should stand with any other, then we would not be standing in a secure place.

Verse 2

Paul addresses an apparent conflict within the Philippian Church and Paul is instructing them to resolve the issue. Possibly these two women, Euodia and Syntyche, were leading to factions in the Church which were opposed to each other. Paul here gives them the advice to be of the same mind as the Lord.

Whenever a dispute arises within the Church the opponents must seek the common ground that is found in Jesus Christ. All other matters outside on the mind of Christ is of less importance.

Verses 3

Paul's true companion in this verse is unknown but he is asking him to help the women who have labored with Paul in the gospel. Paul was asking this companion to help these women, Euodia and Syntyche to become reconciled with each other and come to a like-mindedness with the Lord. These women had worked with Paul in the ministry of the gospel and had a falling out between them. Paul was seeking help for this unfortunate dispute to be cleared up.

We do not know who Clement in this letter is. In the early Church of Rome there was a man named Clement who wrote two letters to the Church in Corinth. It is unlikely that this is the Clement that Paul is referring to. Clement was a common name in the Roman society.

There were many fellow workers in the Church of Philippi and not all of them are named in this letter. But they all received the greatest honor known to man, to have their names written in the Book of Life. (Revelation 20:15)

Verse 4

Even as Paul is writing this letter while in a Roman prison the word joy is all through this letter. (Philippians 1:4; Philippians 1:18; Philippians 1:25; Philippians 2:2; Philippians 2:16-18; Philippians 2:28; Philippians 3:1; Philippians 3:3; Philippians 4:1; Philippians 4:4)

"I am glad that we do not know what the quarrel was about; I am usually thankful for ignorance on such subjects; - but as a cure for disagreements, the apostle says, 'Rejoice in the Lord always.' People who are very happy, especially those who are very happy in the Lord, are not apt either to give offense or to take offense. Their minds are so sweetly occupied with higher things, that they are not easily distracted by the little troubles which naturally arise among such imperfect creatures as we are. Joy in the Lord is the cure for all discord." (Spurgeon)

Joy in the Lord is not based upon a bright optimism or a great attitude towards events in life. Joy comes from the confidence that God is in control of events in the world. This is the confidence and joy that we truly find in the Lord. *"What a gracious God we serve, who makes delight to be a duty, and who commands us to rejoice! Should we not at once be obedient to such a command as this? It is intended that we should be happy."* (Spurgeon)

Verse 5

It is an interesting word that Paul used here which translates from gentleness. The Greek word is “epieikeia” and means patience, softness, the patient mind, modesty, forbearance, the forbearing spirit, or magnanimity. *“The word epieikes is of very extensive signification; it means the same as epieikeia, mildness, patience, yieldingness, gentleness, clemency, moderation, unwillingness to litigate or contend; but moderation is expressive enough as a general term.”* (Clarke) Jesus showed this gentleness with the adulterous woman at the well when she was set up by the Scribes and Pharisees. In spite of her many sins Jesus was gentle with her. This word also describes a person who will let the Lord fight his battles for him. They know that vengeance belongs to the Lord. (Romans 12:19) The person who displays this character is a person who can let go of their anxieties and the things which cause them stress.

This gentleness is also a quality that we are to show towards all men. Not just to who we please. We are at peace with God and this peace allows us to be at peace with our fellow men. We cannot become entangled in the rivalries of the world because we are above that, we are citizens of the Kingdom of Heaven.

We are to watch and pray in the expectation that soon the Lord will return and He is the just and the justifier. (Romans 3:26) This allows us to rejoice and show gentleness towards all men as He is coming soon and will make all things right in this world which is falling apart.

Verse 6

It is not a request for us to be anxious for nothing but a command. We should not intrude into the things that belong to the Lord. This attitude makes of the father of the house instead of the child. It also displays a lack of truth and faith that all things work for good according to God’s plan and purposes. (Romans 8:28)

The Christian is to bring everything to God in prayer not that what we think are bigger than us. Our Lord is a God that loves us and is interested in every facet of our life. Every area of our life is of concern to God.

Our prayers are the broad means of communication with God and our supplications are that which we ask God to do for us. God answers prayer in His perfect timing. Sometimes the answer is know because in His infinite wisdom we ask for things that are not right for us. But we are to let our request be known to Him as He wants to know.

God knows what we want even before we ask but He wants our participation through prayer prior to granting what we ask. We must always be thankful. By His grace we are given far more than we ever ask for and we should always have a thankful heart towards God. Our thanksgiving guards against a whining and complaining spirit before God.

Verse 7

The Scriptures teach three traits to the Peace of God.

- Peace from God: Paul continually used this as an introduction to his letters; it reminds us that our peace comes to us as a gift from God.
- Peace with God: This describes a relationship that we enter into with God through the finished work of Jesus Christ.
- The peace of God: This is the peace spoken of in Philippians 4:7. It is beyond “all mind”; that is, beyond our power of thinking.

“What is God’s peace? The unruffled serenity of the infinitely-happy God, the eternal composure of the absolutely well-contented God.” (Spurgeon)

God’s peace is not senseless and therefore impossible to understand but understanding it is beyond man’s capabilities. (Isaiah 55:9) God’s peace is something that the Christian experiences. God’s peace is not a peace that only the worldly man cannot understand but His peace surpasses all understanding. Even the Christian who is experiencing it cannot fully understand it.

Here Paul uses a military term in the word guard. This is an aspect of God’s peace in that it guards our heart and mind. *“Shall keep them (heart and mind) as in a strong place or a castle.” (Clarke)*

Verse 8

Paul list the things that we are to meditate on which are the fruit and food of the mind that is guarded by the peace of God. By meditating on these things we place them in our mind and our minds will bring them forth from us.

- Whatever is true? Truth is found in God. (2 Titus 2:25) Truth is found in Christ. (Ephesians 4:20-21) Truth is found in the Holy Spirit. (John 16:13) Truth is found in God’s Word. (John 17:17)
- Whatever is honorable? This is whatever is worthy of respect. The Christians is to meditate on whatever worthy of awe and adoration, the sacred as is opposed to the profane.
- Whatever is right? The Christian is to be in alinement with God’s standard of holiness.
- Whatever is pure? Morally clean and undefiled.
- Whatever is lovely? The Christian is to focus on being gracious and show kindness to one another.
- Whatever is of good repute? The Christian should be highly regarded and well thought of. He should be reputable in the world acting in kindness, with courtesy and respect with others.

The Christian must be of a disciplined mind. A Christian is not to be of this world but live as a citizen of the Kingdom of God. The Christian is not to be conformed to this world but the world in which he is traveling to. ***“And do not be conformed to this world, but be transformed by the renewing of your mind, so that you may prove what the will of God is, that which is good and acceptable and perfect.”*** (Romans

12:2) It is the process of sanctification that each Christian must grow through. As we are confronted by the chatter of the world we are to discipline our minds to test these things by the truth of God's Word. We are to capture every evil thought that enters into our minds and hold them captive to the obedience of God's Word. (2 Corinthians 10:5)

Verses 9

The integrity of Paul was not questionable to the Philippian Church and therefore Paul offered himself as the example to follow. Paul was urging them to follow him as he was following Jesus. If the Church at Philippi followed Paul's example then they would have the peace of God and the God of peace would be with them.