

Ninth Annual
TRUTH IN LOVE
LECTURESHIP

Theme:

**Pressing Toward
The Prize**

A Study Of Key Passages
From Philipians



May 19-23, 1999

PAUL SAIN, DIRECTOR

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INTRODUCTION

The most important “*facts*” a person can know (and desperately needs to know) are: (1) God loves you so much. (2) He gave His only begotten Son to die for you. (3) Jesus loved you and shed His blood on the cross for you. (4) Jehovah offers salvation from the sin which would otherwise condemn you. (5) Salvation is only in Jesus Christ (His church). (6) You enter Christ only upon full and complete obedience to the commands of the Savior. (7) Faithfulness is required of the follower of Christ. (8) Heaven awaits the righteous (redeemed).

With these vital facts before our minds, we admonish all to obey Christ, becoming a child of God. Upon being added to the church (Acts 2:47), we exhort one another to faithfully walk in the light (Heb. 10:24-25; I John 1:7f); seeking the Lord first (Matt. 6:33); go on toward perfection (Heb. 6:1); add to your faith Christ-like virtues (II Peter 1:5-11); as we strive for the victory in Christ Jesus (I Cor. 15:57).

The apostle Paul wrote to the Philippian brethren these words of admonition:

Brethren, I count not myself to have apprehended: but this one thing I do, forgetting those things which are behind, and **reaching forth** unto those things which are before, I **PRESS TOWARD THE MARK FOR THE PRIZE** of the high calling of God in Christ Jesus. Let us therefore, as many as be perfect, be thus minded: and if in any thing ye be otherwise minded, God shall reveal even this unto you. Nevertheless, whereto we have already attained, let us walk by the same rule, let us mind the same thing. Brethren, be followers together of me, and mark them which walk so as ye have us for an ensample (Phil. 3:13-17).

The admonitions were so needed and relevant to the saints in the first century, but equally so to Christians today. Satan desires to distract, discourage and defeat you. He has ministering servants who are aggressively and militantly working to keep you out of heaven. If we are to receive the “*crown of life*” (Rev. 2:10), we must be striving, working, endeavoring, maintaining ~ remaining faithful to the end (Matt. 10:22). We must “*press toward*” the heavenly goal.

The lessons contained in this volume (which were presented orally in the 9th Annual **Truth In Love** Lectureship) will point you to the Son of God and encourage you to daily walk closer to Him. As you read these lessons, carefully consider your soul’s indescribable value, the Savior’s offer of salvation, eternity’s length, heaven’s beauty and hell’s horror.

Paul Sain

Lectureship Director

DEDICATION

The work of our Lord (locally and throughout the world) is accomplished **ONLY** with the assistance of many faithful and diligent workers who serve behind the scenes. Special series such as this 9th Annual **Truth In Love** Lectureship are made possible by faithful ones who work before, during and after the lessons begin. These valuable and vital servants go about their work often without being noticed and regularly without due credit being given to them. While these unnamed “*servants*” certainly include men and women, we wish to give due credit and special emphasis to the precious and valuable women.

The church in the first century was faithful and continued to grow as God desired, in large part, due to women who believed, obeyed and lived in Christ. Evangelists were strengthened and encouraged by many faithful co-workers, women in Christ.

The East Hill congregation has been richly blessed by the faithfulness of many godly women who years ago set their sights on heaven and have continued steadfastly toward that goal. For many years, husbands, children, and friends have been encouraged to follow and live for God by these godly ladies. Bible knowledge abounds in these diligent students of the Word. They have taught hundreds of children in the Bible class. Their written notes, caring phone calls, delicious food, multiple talents in preparation for an event, etc., have blessed countless lives within this family and around the world. Their Christ-like examples shines as a beacon light in the harbor, before all, drawing many to the Son of God.

With great love, appreciation and respect, we dedicate this volume to these faithful Christian women.

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WOMEN'S CLASS:

All Seven Wives Of Students At The
Memphis School of Preaching Spoke On...

**“My Goal As A Christian Woman And
The Wife Of A Preacher Of The Gospel”**

Philippians 3:14; 4:3

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Pressing Toward The Prize



***A Study Of Key Passages
From
The Book Of Philippians***

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Pressing Toward The Prize

*A Study Of Key Passages
From Philipians*



Ninth Annual

TRUTH IN LOVE

LECTURESHIP

PAUL SAIN, DIRECTOR

Hosted By The
East Hill Church Of Christ

Chapter 1

An Overview Of The Book Of Philippians

Johnny Ramsey



A native of Sherman, Texas • Graduate of Abilene Christian College • Johnny has been preaching for 50 years, living in Australia for three of those years • He has held almost 1000 gospel meetings in 43 states and 17 countries • Brother Ramsey is the author of 10 books, 25 tracts and over 1,000 printed articles • Married to Iris Baker • They have four children and nine grandchildren.

“Come over into Macedonia and help us,” the famous cry of Acts 16, is the background to this lovely book of four salient chapters. A letter of praise and commendation from Paul to a church dearly beloved makes Philippians a rich and rare treatise. From a prison cell in Rome, the great apostle pens an epistle of encouragement to brethren who had helped him constantly in the spread of the gospel “*from the first day even until now.*” On Paul’s second tour of evangelism, after being forbidden to enter Asia or Bithynia, Christ’s ambassador goes to Europe with the glad tiding to the city named for the father of Alexander the Great—Philip of Macedonia. Here Lydia and her helpers are obedient to the truth, being baptized into Christ, becoming the first ones in Europe to enter the Lord’s church. Thereafter, Paul and Silas are placed in prison due to the wrath of the owners of a damsel possessed by demons, who was cleansed by the power of God. They were using her as a fortune-teller and Paul ruined their

evil business. Following this incident, one can read graphic events concerning the conversion of the warden of the prison. Upon hearing the message of Christ, the Philippian jailor was baptized into the Lord. There was great rejoicing (Acts 16:31-35). Thus, the nucleus of the church at Philippi learned early how to be happy in the midst of adversity. Paul's theme in the epistle he wrote to them later is found in Philippians, chapter four!

1. Rejoice In The Lord Always
2. Maintain Peace Passing Understanding
3. Be Pure In Life
4. Be Content
5. Remember The Strength Christ Affords
6. God Will Supply All Your Needs
7. Pray Always With Deep Thanksgiving

Actually, a basic outline of Philippians tells us of the joy of being a Christian. Notice a simple view of this four chapter epistle.

- | | |
|------------|---|
| Chapter 1: | Christ is the Purpose of Life
(1:21) ~ “For to me to live is Christ...” |
| Chapter 2: | Christ is the Pattern of Life
(2:5) ~ “Let this mind be in you...” |
| Chapter 3: | Christ is the Prize of Life
(3:14) ~ “I press toward the mark for the prize...in Christ Jesus.” |
| Chapter 4: | Christ is the Power of Life
(4:13) ~ “I can do all things through Christ...” |

In chapter one of Philippians, Paul mentions the defense of the gospel (1:17). In chapter two, he mentions the friends of the gospel (the Philippians, Timothy, Epaphroditus), while in chapter three, he cites the enemies of the gospel (3:18-19). Finally, in section four Paul recites beautifully the power of the gospel as there were even “...saints...of Caesar's household” (Phil. 4:22).

Paul's own surrender to the gospel is chronicled in 3:4-11. The entire book is a reflection of Paul's life because of the message of redemption. Preaching Christ, Living for Christ, Pressing Toward Christ and Serving the Master with gratitude pretty well sum up the gist of Philippians. Paul emphasizes the necessity of practicing what we preach in vivid verses such as 1:27 and 2:15 where we learn to shine as lights in a world of darkness by holding forth the light of truth "*to a perverse generation.*"

The mind of Christ (2:5-11) is the goal of every faithful child of God. Since Jesus "*...pleased not himself...*" (Rom. 15:3) we, who claim to be His followers, must be servants of all (Matt. 23:10-12). Knowing Christ (3:10-11) involves "*working out our own salvation*" as God works in us unto His good pleasure (2:12-13). We are bought with a price and do not belong to ourselves (I Cor. 6:19).

Christians must learn to put their approval on things that are excellent (1:10) and not on lesser values. We must not only believe on Him but be willing to suffer for the Lord's sake (1:29). We must be concerned with the needs of others and crush selfishness from our lives (2:1-4). Like Timothy we must think first of God's kingdom and even be willing to die, if need be, for the cause of righteousness. Paul had to give up a place of prestige to become a persecuted servant of the Savior (3:1-11), but he counted it a good bargain because it meant a closer walk with God!

There are enemies of Truth who esteem sensual pleasures above spiritual values, but our citizenship primarily is in heaven (3:20) from whence we should eagerly look for the Lord. While in the flesh, on earth, we must strive for unity and love within the body of

Christ (4:1-3) as we joyously and gratefully pursue peace and purity (4:4-9). Content with God’s provisions, but never satisfied with our own spiritual endeavors, we press on to greater heights. Though strangers in a world of sin we have a purpose on earth and that is to glorify God whom we know will supply all that we need. There is power enough in the gospel to convert even our enemies (4:22) so we press on in the strength that Christ gives. This is the abundant message of Philippians.

The Book Of Philippians

Named for Alexander the Great’s father, Philip of Macedon (N. Greece)—Gold Mines—10 miles inland from Neapolis; “*Little Rome*,” “*Latin*.”

Purpose of the book of Philippians: To show gratitude for Epaphroditus.

Background: Acts 16

Come over into Macedonia

Speedy Journey

Lydia

Young Damsel

In Jail (Songs In The Night)

The Jailer

Next Day

The Gospel

To

Europe

Philippians

1. Christ Controls My Life
2. Christ Is The Pattern Of My Life
3. Christ Is The Goal.
4. He Is The Strength Of Life

Chapter 1 Paul in Prison

Ever Grateful to Elders, Deacons, Saints, who have had the fellowship from first to last with Paul in the Gospel.

Even the Palace Guards Know of his Devotion
Boldness of Brethren
Approval on Excellent Things
“Christ Is Preached” (Acts 8)
Magnified—Strait—Desire to Depart (Body + Spirit)
 “For to me to live”
“Practice What You Preach”
Belief + Suffering

Points In Philippians

Living For Christ
The Defense Of The Gospel
Practice And Preaching
Striving Together
The Mind Of Christ
God Works In You
First Things First
Power Of The Gospel
Getting To Know Jesus
Forgetting Is Necessary
Pressing On
Enemies Of Christ
True Citizenship
Rejoice—Regardless!
Thinking Properly
Content But Not Satisfied
God Supplies Every Need
Saints In Caesar’s House

Main Emphasis of The Book: “A Letter of Praise and Commendation”

Chapter 1 “Practice What You Preach”
Chapter 2 “Follow The Leader”
Chapter 3 “Keep Pressing On”
 Press=A footrace—To Pursue—Speed
 on Earnestly
Chapter 4 “Keep On Smiling”

Blessings Christ Provides

There are so many vibrant passages and principles in the Bible concerning the value of Christianity that one must carefully search for the most eloquent of them all. We are blessed indeed by the contribution the Lord makes to our earthly sojourn. Truly, we are always led in triumph in Christ Jesus (II Cor. 2:14). Since He was delivered for our offenses and raised again for our justification (Rom. 4:25), we owe to the cause of the Savior our best efforts. An unknown poet contributes these words:

If only I had found Jesus sooner
If the past I could only recall
But how thankful I am
For the blood of the Lamb
And the fact that I found Him at all!

How empty and vain our days would be without our blessed Redeemer. He provides sunshine, purpose and hope to an otherwise drab existence. While we were yet sinners God sent His son to die for us (Rom. 5:8) and to leave us an example to follow (I Peter 2:21) so that one day we could dwell in heaven. Abundant living is the heart and core of the gospel system (John 10:10) because “...*the love of God is shed abroad in our hearts...*” (Rom. 5:5). The Lamb of God came to take away our sins (John 1:29) and to give unto us the words of eternal life (John 6:68). Verily, “...*the unsearchable riches of Christ...*” provide us with the best of two worlds (Eph. 3:8-21).

Christianity involves four fundamental issues. First of all we must submit our wills unto the Lord (Acts 9:6). Secondly, we must admit our sinfulness (I Sam. 26:21). Thirdly, we must humbly commit our very souls to His cause (Rom. 12:2) and lastly, we should ever be ready

and willing to transmit the message of truth to others (II Tim. 2:2). When we consider the bountiful arrangement that the gospel produces in our lives such matters ought to naturally and graciously follow. Another unknown poet tells us of the power in the Cross of Calvary:

I knelt in tears at the feet of Christ
In the hush of the twilight dim,
And all that I was, or hoped, or sought,
Surrendered unto Him.
Crowned or crucified, my heart shall know
No King, but Christ, who loved me so.

Let us briefly notice three major blessings in the life of a Christian. Three points alone should make us much more grateful as followers of the Man of Galilee:

1. Peace In The Midst Of Pain

The Prince of Peace (Isa. 9:6) with the gospel of peace (Rom. 10:15) grants tranquil joys the world cannot fathom (Phil. 4:7). In the midst of evil, sorrow, error and sadness the faithful child of God needs not suffer as others do who have no hope (I Thess. 4:17-18). The calm assurance that God's will shall be ultimately accomplished (Dan. 4:25) gives us comfort and help in every time of need (Heb. 4:16). Therefore, we will not waste precious moments feeling sorry for ourselves or being bitter toward others. We must be about our heavenly Father's business (Luke 2:49) and just cannot allow Satan an opportunity to gain advantage over us (II Cor. 2:11). We will spend our time in striving to be doctrinally sound (I Tim. 4:16), benevolently kind (James 1:27), morally pure (II Cor. 5:17), evangelistically zealous (Acts 5:42) and fervent in hope (Titus 1:2). Being busy in the vineyard of the Lord will occupy our energies in

things divine and purposeful. This is a certain prescription for happiness. What a blessing Christ provides in this regard!

2. Contentment In The Midst Of Chaos

Paul, from prison, under cruel, despotic Nero, wrote of the contentment Christians should have regardless of external circumstances. The Psalmist told of being young and later old yet never seeing the Lord forsake His own. Christians are told in I Timothy that we can lead tranquil lives in all godliness although the world is in a mess. Indeed, “...*godliness with contentment is great gain*” (I Tim. 6:6). Job is the classic reminder of one who learned the way of inner calmness best of all when he possessed the least of worldly gain and earthly lore. In Psalms 84:10 we read again this principle:

...I had rather be a doorkeeper in the house of my God, than to dwell in the tents of wickedness.

We need to learn the value of gratitude in the midst of grumbling (Phil. 2:12-16) and look for the silver linings when storm clouds peel forth. When things look the roughest and we seem to be devoid of materialistic benefits we need to recall Habakkuk’s powerful entreaty: “*Still, I will trust in the Lord.*” Always remember the little slogan that challenges: “*You cannot be optimistic if you have misti-optics.*” All cry-babies to the back of the line, please!

3. Salvation In The Midst Of Sin

We certainly do live in an incredibly wicked world. As Jeremiah stated so we now observe: “*The whole land is full of sin.*”

However, Christians are not of the world (John

15:19) and we can rise above the pettiness and carnality that would seek to overwhelm us. Realizing this earth is not our home (Heb. 11:16) will help us to make our eternal destiny a motivating factor in living for Jesus now! Why should children of God focus their thinking on sinful, shameful, degrading matters when the joy of salvation (I Peter 1:7) grants unto us “...*a new and living way...*” (Heb. 10:20)? Let us sing anew the fervent words of an old hymn:

Nearer, still nearer, Lord to be Thine
Sin with its follies I gladly resign
All of its pleasures, pomp and its pride
Give me but Jesus, my Lord crucified.

The blessings Christ provides are just too precious to miss!

Someone has well stated that genuine Christians will be: (a) Completely fearless, (b) Absurdly happy; and (c) In constant trouble! Paul echoes these sentiments in II Corinthians 4:9-5:1. Outwardly things can get rough for the faithful child of God. However, inwardly—where it really counts—we are renewed day by day! We may be considered “*fools for Christ,*” I Corinthians 4:10, but the everlasting joy of eternal bliss awaits us, Titus 1:2. Far better to suffer for the cause of Christ in these days than to refuse and therefore be lost in eternity. As Romans 8:18 powerfully reminds us:

...the sufferings of this present time are not
worthy to be compared with the glory which
shall be revealed in us.

The pure religion of James 1:27 involves a proper evaluation of trials, riches, prayer, faith, temptation, blessings, purity, obedience, and sincere concern for others, self and the Scriptures. Unless we are willing to

follow Jesus all the way, Revelation 14:4-5, we do not yet comprehend the life of a Christian.

Being a Christian (one who belongs to the Lord) means turning our back upon worldliness, I John 2:15-17. We find no point of rejoicing in the evil of past days, Ephesians 4:20-24. Being a new creation in Christ Jesus propels us into a closer walk of service with God.

Being a Christian means we are vitally interested in leading others out of darkness also. Hating sin and the stain of iniquity, we will diligently strive to snatch out of the fire, Jude 23, those who are nearly gone.

Being a Christian means that we find our happiness in spiritual pursuits of life. In fact, our peace of mind is the result of a prayerful gratitude of the Lord's rich provisions, Philippians 4:4-19. There is no condemnation for those who walk in the paths of spirituality, Romans 8:1-4. Being a Christian, therefore, means that the works of the flesh will not overwhelm us. And that spells true victory!

Chapter 2

“Pressing Toward The Mark For The Prize”

• Philippians 3:14 •

Jim Laws



Jim was raised in Murfreesboro, Tennessee, and has been preaching for several years ~ He is the Associate Editor of the *Spiritual Sword* journal, and directs the annual *Spiritual Sword* lectureship ~ An excellent writer ~ Has taught in public schools in Tennessee and at the Christian college level ~ Presently he is working with the Getwell congregation in Memphis, Tennessee ~ Jim has two children.

The church at Philippi was established on Paul’s second missionary journey (Acts 16), and it proved itself to be a source of great joy to the apostle. Lydia and her household and the jailer and his household were the first converts in this area. Some ten years after the beginning of the congregation, Paul wrote a letter to the church while he was a prisoner in Rome (AD 61-63). When the church heard that Paul was a prisoner, they sent help to him. Paul had received the gift from the church, which had been brought to him by Epaphroditus. While in Rome, Epaphroditus became seriously ill. The church at Philippi heard of his illness and became very concerned about him. Epaphroditus recovered; naturally, Paul wanted to assuage the fears of the home congregation, so he sent Epaphroditus back home with this letter to the church. In this letter, he wrote to the church at Philippi expressing his gratitude for the gift, informed the Philippians of his own condition, and taught and exhorted them. Paul

wrote four epistles while a prisoner in Rome. Of these four prison epistles, Philippians is in a class all its own. As one might surmise, it is a letter filled with tenderness, rejoicing and thanksgiving. The fact that Jesus is referred to forty times in the letter is an indication of its purpose. Notice also that the word “joy” (chara) is used five times (1:4, 25; 2:2, 29; 4:1), the verb “to rejoice” (chairein) occurs eleven times (twice in 1:18; 2:17-18; 4:4; once in 2:28; 3:1; 4:10). This is why the epistle is sometimes called “*Paul’s Hymn of Joy*.” With such a strong emphasis concerning Christ and the matter of joy and rejoicing, it is clear that the overall theme of the book would be “*Christ, the key to confidence and joy*.”

One would be hard pressed to find one single passage from the book which might serve as the key verse to the book of Philippians; there are a number that would serve well. However, one verse that is certainly at the heart of the book would have to be Philippians 3:14. Paul expresses his desire to go to heaven so strongly, while encouraging others to do the same, that this verse has become one of the highlights of the book, as well as the entire Bible. Therefore, this chapter will focus upon Paul’s statement found in Philippians 3:14. It will discuss it from the standpoint of its context as well as make application to us today. It is hoped that by understanding the verse better we, too, will grow in our desire to go to heaven and to help others go as much as we possibly can.

Philippians 3:13-14

In chapter one, after expressing his gratitude for the church at Philippi, Paul states to them what has been the effect of his imprisonment in Rome—the further spread of the gospel.¹ His trials had been the means of the knowledge of Christ even in the palace. He states that Christ is the great end and aim of his life (1:21).

In chapter two, Paul exhorts them toward greater levels of humility, unity, and service. Follow the example of Christ, he says (vs. 5-11). He exhorts them to work out their own salvation (vs. 12-13); then, he also adds an exhortation to avoid complaining and disputing (vs. 14-16). He tells them of Timothy (vs. 19-24), as well as Epaphroditus (vs. 25-30).²

Chapter three expresses a major concern that Paul has for his Christian brethren. Here, Paul warns them against the Judaizing teachers who were insisting that Gentile Christians obey the Law of Moses in order to be saved (vs. 1-11). Paul will have nothing of such a false view. Beware of them, he warns, those who act like dogs (v. 2). Paul meets their challenge by showing the advantages of birth and education, which surpassed them all (vs. 4-5). He renounces all of this as being worthless in the matter of salvation. Christ was more to him than all the advantages of birth and rank.³

“Brethren, I count not myself to have apprehended” (v. 13)—Paul reaches the point in his discussion where he describes his own purpose and desire for himself, as well as for the church. Throughout these verses Paul makes allusion to the ancient Greek games that were so familiar to all of his readers. Even though he had given up all for Christ, he does not consider that he had arrived spiritually. He has been converted (v. 9); he had been raised to a new life in Christ Jesus (v. 10); he looked forward to a resurrection that had not as yet taken place (v. 11); but he had not come to the completion of his hopes. As he puts it, he does not count himself as having *“apprehended.”* He was not a perfect man (*“either were already perfect,”* v. 12). He is not satisfied with himself spiritually, nor has he attained the prize (the word *“attained”* refers to having arrived at the goal and having

won the prize). Paul has reference to his moral character here. Though all who know the life of the great apostle would not question his love, zeal, self denial, and devotion to the work and cause of Christ, still for him he was not yet complete. This completeness would not come until he was perfectly free from sin, delivered from trials and temptations, and in possession of eternal life. All this would be needed for him to come to complete happiness. In order to come to this understanding of himself, he says that there is some counting and evaluating to be done in his life. In other words, he looks at himself spiritually and realizes that he has not reached the level of spiritual maturity that he wants. As a Jew, he was as near perfection as one could be. Notice his discussion of his attainments in that respect (vs. 5-7). However, when Paul compares those matters with Christ, he says that his accomplishments are really worthless (vs. 7-8). He says, *“But what things were gain to me, those I counted loss for Christ”* (v. 7).

The counting and spiritual evaluation that Paul gave to himself must be a continuous process for us as well, if we are to grow as we ought and in turn be pleasing in the sight of God. We cheat ourselves as well as deprive ourselves of eternity when we fail to undergo such a self-counting. Which one of us can truly say that we have reached perfection or completeness spiritually? However, by the action of some they seem to think so. For instance, many do not give attention to reading and studying as they ought. They do not read the Bible, which is the most important book of all to read, nor do they read good biblically based material designed to help them understand the Bible as well as understand the complex issues we face today. Many have simply stopped studying God’s word. The Hebrew writer’s exhortation is sorely needed today, when he told them that by now they should

be teachers, but they need to be taught the simplest things that God has said (Heb. 5:12). As a consequence many have stopped growing spiritually. They have failed to do as Peter taught,

...add to your faith virtue; and to virtue knowledge; and to knowledge temperance; and to temperance patience; and to patience godliness; and to godliness brotherly kindness; and to brotherly kindness charity (II Peter 1:5-7).

The first step in real growth is to realize the need. Paul realized his need to grow, and so should we. However, if Satan can keep us busy with the material things of life, so much so that we never take the needed time to give ourselves the counting and spiritual evaluation that we should, then he has won.

"This one thing I do" (v. 13)—This phrase is a significant one. Actually, the original has *"one thing."* In other words, Paul had eliminated from his life all the superficial goals of worldly accomplishment. He wanted to accomplish one thing and that was to receive eternal life. Eternity was the focus of his life. The New Testament has emphasized the importance of this for man from beginning to end.

One will find that there are many things that will vie for first place position in our lives. Money, for instance, will be a strong temptation for many. Only God would know just how many have this as being the *"one thing"* of their lives, the accumulation of more and more. Some will put power, influence, or their job as life's top priority. Look at the number of young people who put sports before everything else and the parents who support them in this pursuit. Jesus said, *"but seek ye first the kingdom of God, and his righteousness; and all these things shall*

be added unto you” (Matt. 6:33). Therefore, the child of God is to put the kingdom or the church at the top of his list of priorities, not last. He is to leave the cares of this life up to God. Mankind is seriously ignorant of these important matters. Mankind for the most part knows nothing of God and His wonderful daily care of our lives. He is engulfed in his own materialistic search for more and more. He is, for the most part, a stranger to the better hope of an eternal home with God. He has hope, but it is misdirected toward this world and not toward the next. Therefore, his hope is temporary; it lasts only for a few years, and it dies when he dies. Matthew 16:26 states,

For what is a man profited, if he shall gain the whole world, and lose his own soul? Or what shall a man give in exchange for his soul?

Jesus, speaking hypothetically, reasons that even if we were to receive the world as our own possession, but we were to lose our souls in the process, we would have made a very bad bargain. Paul makes the point again, *“Set your affection on things above, not on things on the earth”* (Col. 3:2). *“Teaching us that, denying ungodliness and worldly lusts, we should live soberly, righteously, and godly, in this present world”* (Titus 2:12). The Bible is teaching us of the importance of setting our priorities straight. God wants us to put eternity at the top of our list and not at the bottom of it. He knew that we would have the need for this instruction. Paul knew how to eliminate and minimize these worldly matters from his life so as to make eternal life with God the one thing of his life, and so should we.

How shall we develop this attitude and properly make an eternity with God the *“one thing”* of our lives? First, come to the realization that life is short and very

uncertain. This important truth is taught from the beginning to the end of the Bible. Even if we did not have a Bible, we would know that this is true. Our lives are short while we live here; therefore, we do not have the time to become preoccupied with the superficial and the trivial. We are to buy up every opportunity to work and serve the Lord while we can (Eph. 5:16). All of us need those times when we are engaged in the recreational; however, we have matters out of focus when the recreational occupies the main focus of our time and attention, and the Lord is given whatever we happen to have left over. Second, realize that our turning to Christ through an obedient faith is not the end but the beginning. Because of this obedient faith, we have received forgiveness as a present blessing due to the benefits of the blood of Christ and the grace of God, and we have the present hope of salvation. We have been set free from the guilt of sin so as to live for Christ and to serve Christ. As long as Paul was on this earth, he was going to do both to the very best of his ability. When we come to realize that our conversion to Christ is not the end but the beginning, then this will help us to rearrange our priorities to make an eternity with God the “*one thing*” of our lives. Third, work at growing in the grace and in the knowledge of our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ (II Peter 3:18). Come to recognize the importance of the Bible; study it regularly and consistently. Secure good research tools that will help you in understanding the background of the Bible as well as the important words you will read. Read good literature that has been published about the Bible as well as crucial issues that arise concerning what the Bible teaches. Take the opportunity to learn from men of maturity, experience, and understanding. Fourth, in your study of the sacred scriptures come to realize how important the church of

the Lord is. You should come to realize that the church is composed of people; learn just how important each member of the Lord’s church is. You should come to learn that each member is a source of encouragement to you to live faithfully, as you should be to others. Fifth, make the conscious effort to remove yourself from being the center by remembering that there will be a time of reckoning one great day. Remind yourself that God will judge the world one day for what we have done, or failed to do (John 5:28-29; Acts 17:31; Rom. 14:10; II Cor. 5:10).

“Forgetting those things which are behind me, and reaching forth unto those things which are before me” (v. 13)—There are two important considerations to be understood from this portion of the verse. First, Paul says that there must be forgetting that takes place, and second, there must be a reaching forth that takes place. First, Paul had many memories as a Jewish leader. To see this, simply refer to what he had already said about himself (see vs. 5-6). Yet, as a Christian he had many accomplishments. He was an apostle of Christ, sometimes referred to as the apostle to the Gentiles. He was one who had been persecuted for the cause of Christ. Paul the apostle had written by inspiration more books of the New Testament than any other single writer. However, as the text indicates, Paul never thought of himself as someone who would rest on previous accomplishments. The passage states that he forgot these matters so as to focus on what was yet to be accomplished. Jesus was this way. He could have focused on what He had accomplished in the matter of salvation. He could have stopped to think of the sermons He had preached, the lessons to the multitudes He taught, and the mighty miracles He performed. Yet His focus was always on the cross.

We need to be this way. We need this forgetting and reaching attitude. Our attitude is often to remind

ourselves and others of what we have done. We fail to remember that when we have done all that we can do, we are still unworthy (see Luke 15:10). We need to forget the past and realize that there is much yet to do. Consider this: There are somewhere in the neighborhood of 11,000 congregations of the Lord in this country. This would mean something over one million members. Yet there are 260 million people in our nation today. We have a great deal yet to do. Of these 11,000 congregations we are sending out some 600 missionaries to the 5.8 billion people around the world. Which one can say that we have so arrived that we may now relax our efforts for the Lord based on what has been accomplished? Even within our own respective congregations and our own communities, there is much to be done. We have work to do in strengthening the Lord's church at home. Stop and consider the inroads Satan has made into so many congregations. Consider the impact that we currently have and what is yet to be made on our respective communities. We have accomplished a great deal, yet there is more to be done, both in and out of the church.

Forgetting has another important aspect to it. As the passage indicates, Paul worked at forgetting the past, not only its accomplishments, but also its failures. This is an enormous help to children of God who have failed in their work and service to God. Paul at one time was Saul of Tarsus, one who had failed God (Rom. 7:18-19; II Cor. 3:5; Eph. 3:8). Paul faced what each of us must face, failure and shortcoming, the struggle to forget it and to move on. How does one do this? By remembering that the future can and will erase the past, due to our repentance and God's forgiveness. That is why his reference to "*reaching forth*" with regard to the future is so important as it is a means of forgetting the failures and concentrating on what can be accomplished. To

concentrate on the past is a mistake; it is to be forgotten. The things of the future are to be the focus of our mind. We do not have the time nor the energy to be filled with stress and strain over sin that has been forgiven.

Second, Paul writes that he reaches forth to what is yet ahead. To “*reach*” refers to the idea of straining forward (epekteinomenos, “*to strain*,” Gingrich, p. 284). The runner at the end of the race is going for the finish line. The athlete does not merely coast to the end; rather he strains to give it all he has. He is racing hard for the finish line. He eyes for nothing but the goal. His hands are flailing, and even his body is somewhat curved so as to be the first to cross the finish line. This is an appropriate metaphor of the Christian life. This image of running the race is laced throughout this significant Bible passage (Phil. 3:13-14). Paul realized that this race, a metaphor for Christian living, was not over (see II Tim. 4:6-8, where Paul at that time in his life anticipates the end of earthly life). That is why he would press on, not looking back.

“*I press toward the mark*” (v. 14)—Much of what Paul says in this verse is based on what he has said in the previous verses. Because of these matters, Paul presses on. By this he means that he pursues with the idea of speeding on earnestly. The imagery once again is the foot race. You do not just enter the race and run it. You give it everything you have. He says that he presses toward the mark. What is the mark? Is it just keeping pace with others? Is it running for a while until he thinks he has gone far enough? The mark refers to the course that the contestants in the games would follow. The race in the ancient games was marked out by a line. The runners were to look frequently at the mark, which was the boundary of the race, lest they run out of bounds.⁴ Paul is saying, “*I follow along the mark*” (skopos, the

distant mark looked at, the “goal,” Thayer, p. 579, translated “prize,” ASV). In other words, in running for the prize of righteousness he kept within the prescribed bounds; it is a marked out course of faith and holy living. To do this meant that he had suffered persecution and affliction along this route, but he did this without stopping in the middle of the race or running out of bounds. He was so determined to run all the way, lawfully and legally, that he would be willing to die for the truth if need be (see v. 16; also Rev. 2:10). This was not the case with the false teachers who were troubling the church (v. 18). They were in fact enemies of the cross of Christ due to the fact that they had corrupted the message of the gospel. Notice also the prepositions that Paul uses in this verse. The first one is “toward,” which expresses the aim of the runner. The second is “for” or “unto” (better translated “unto” as it is in the ASV instead of “for the prize” as in the KJV), which expresses the end of the race.⁵ Notice his reference to “the high calling of God” or the “upward calling” in the passage, which has reference to the prize itself, that being, the living of eternal life with God in heaven. This is something that we begin to experience here as we live our lives for Christ, but we will one day come to experience this fully and completely in eternity. Therefore, it is God who sets before man the “mark-goal,” which is the course of one’s life. It is this divine course, the faithful living of the Christian life, that gives so much meaning to our work and direction to our lives. As Paul says, we must forget those things that are behind and keep in step with this divinely appointed mark or goal, that is, keep in step with God’s divine revelation. The prize was what Paul was after, which would be presented to him by God, the ultimate judge of every life.⁶ The prize, eternal life, may be received only if one throws his whole self into it. Hebrews 12:1 states,

Wherefore seeing we also are compassed about with so great a cloud of witnesses, let us lay aside every weight, and the sin which doth so easily beset us, and let us run with patience the race that is set before us.

Closely related to this is I Corinthians 9:25,

And every man that striveth for the mastery is temperate in all things. Now they do it to obtain a corruptible crown; but we an incorruptible.

There are a number of comparisons between the race and Paul’s use of it to illustrate the Christian life. For instance, the contestant must be legally enrolled in the contest in order to win. The Christian must contend lawfully (II Tim. 2:5). Discipline is an absolute prerequisite of success; Christians must lay aside every weight and the ever-convenient sin in order to win (Heb. 12:1). Patience is required of both the athletic contestant and the Christian, endurance being necessary to win in both cases. The earthly contestant receives a perishable reward, the Christian an eternal reward (I Cor. 9:25). However, there comes a point when the analogy becomes a contrast, only one receives the prize in an earthly contest, whereas in the matter of heaven, everyone may receive the gift, as my victory depends on my achievement and not the achievement of others. If we run well, we will win; in fact, each one who runs faithfully will win. How much better it is to run in such a race where everyone may win rather than just one.

Paul mentions the fact that this “*high calling of God,*” eternal life, which we will one day receive, is to be found “*in Christ Jesus.*” This, too, is a significant phrase, as there is no prize to be received outside of Christ; one must be found “*in Christ.*” The only way that

the scriptures teach that one may be found *“in Christ”* is for one to be baptized into Christ. Notice Galatians 3:27 states,

For ye are all the children of God by faith in Christ Jesus. For as many of you as have been baptized into Christ have put on Christ.

In this passage Paul tells us what we are, that we are *“children of God”* (v. 26); he tells us where we are, *“in Christ Jesus”* (v. 26); and he tells us when we became children of God, when we were *“baptized into Christ”* (v. 27). Passages such as Ephesians 1:3 tell us that all spiritual blessings are to be found *“in Christ;”* II Corinthians 5:17 relates the fact that if we are in Christ, then we are considered as new creatures or a new creation, that is, a new man spiritually. Once again, in Romans 6:3-4, reference is made to the fact that one is baptized into this new relationship with Christ. Faith, confession, and repentance are equally essential, of course, in enjoying the blessings that are to be found in Christ; however, it is the act of being baptized, immersed in water, that is the *“threshold”* step, if you will, that makes that new relationship a reality.

Summation

The reader can see by now that Philippians 3:13-14 is certainly a key passage to the book of Philippians. While expressing Paul’s thankfulness to the church for their help, Paul also exhorts the church (Phil. 3) in important matters pertaining to certain errors that they were facing. Paul insists that Christians are the true circumcision, the true people of God, and that having God’s favor is not dependent upon the fleshly act of circumcision. Therefore, as with Paul, we do not have confidence in the flesh, but we look forward to the day

when we will attain unto that glorious resurrection referred to in the Scriptures. We do not claim to have reached perfection, but we press on with purpose of heart, forgetting the things which are behind, and reaching forth to the things ahead. We so live realizing that our citizenship is in heaven, which we will one day receive by the grace of God and by our obedient faith.⁷

Endnotes

1 This article is primarily based upon the **King James Version** unless otherwise indicated.

2 James Burton Coffman, **Commentary on Galatians, Ephesians, Philippians, Colossians** (Austin, TX: Firm foundation Publishing House, 1977), pp. 249-336.

3 William Barclay, **The Letters of the Philippians, Colossians and Thesalonians** (Philadelphia: The Westminster Press, 1976), p. 80.

4 James Macknight, **Macknight on the Epistles**, One-Volume Edition (Grand Rapids: Baker Book House, 1984), p. 368.

5 B. C. Caffin, **The Pulpit Commentary**, Vol. 20, Philippians (Grand Rapids: Wm. B. Eerdmans Publishing Company, 1950), p. 115.

6 David Lipscomb, **A Commentary on NT Epistles**, Vol. IV (Nashville: The Gospel Advocate Company, 1964), pp. 208-209.

7 There have been several important works that have helped in the preparation of this material, such as the **International Standard Bible Encyclopaedia**, Vol. IV (Chicago: The Howard Severance Company, 1915), p. 2375; Walter Bauer, William F. Arndt, F. Wilbur Gingrich, and Frederick Danker, **A Greek-English Lexicon of the New Testament and other Early Christian Literature** (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1979), p. 764; Joseph Henry Thayer's, **Greek-English Lexicon of the New Testament** (Grand Rapids: Baker Book House, 1980), and **Theological Dictionary of the New Testament**, 10 vols., Gerhard Kittel, ed. (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1976).

Chapter 3

The “Walk” Required To Receive The Prize

• Philippians 1:27; 3:20; 4:13 •

James Meadows

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Only let your conversation be as it becometh the gospel of Christ: that whether I come and see you, or else be absent, I may hear of your affairs, that ye stand fast in one spirit, with one mind striving together for the faith of the gospel; And in nothing terrified by your adversaries: which is to them an evident token of perdition, but to you of salvation, and that of God. For unto you it is given in the behalf of Christ, not only to believe on him, but also to suffer for his sake; Having the same conflict which ye saw in me, and now hear to be in me (Phil. 1:27-30).¹

The goal of every Christian should be to so live as to receive the “*prize of the high calling of God*” (Phil. 3:14). All that we endure is working for us “...*a far more exceeding and eternal weight of glory*” (II Cor. 4:17). We are striving for “...*an inheritance incorruptible, and undefiled, and that fadeth not away, reserved in heaven for you*” (I Peter 1:4).

It is my responsibility in this lesson to emphasize the walk required to receive the prize. The following plan will be followed in explaining and emphasizing this theme: **First**, what is the meaning of walk; **second**, what is the walk required; **third**, our walk or manner of life is in heaven; **fourth**, true contentment is in Christ; and **fifth** the conclusion.

What Is The Meaning Of Walk?

The word “*walk*” sometimes refers to one’s physical activities (always so used in the Synoptic Gospels, except Mark 7:5). Figuratively, “*signifying the whole round of the activities of the individual life....*”² It sometimes describes the walk of the unconverted.

This I say therefore, and testify in the Lord, that ye henceforth walk not as other Gentiles walk, in the vanity of their mind (Eph. 4:17).

It sometimes describes the walk of the Christian. “*As ye have therefore received Christ Jesus the Lord, so walk ye in him*” (Col. 2:6).

“*Only let your conversation (“manner of life,” ASV) be as it becometh (“be worthy,” ASV) the gospel of Christ*” (Phil. 1:27). “*Let your conversation be*” is all one word in the Greek, **politeuesthe**. This verb occurs (in NT) only here and Acts 23:1, where it is correctly translated “*I had lived.*”³ Thayer says the word means “*to behave as a citizen, to avail one’s self or recognize the laws.*” “*Conduct yourselves in a manner worthy of the gospel of Christ*” (NSSV, NIV). “*Conversation*” is “*derived from the Latin word **conversari**, which means to conduct oneself or to behave oneself...Let your whole behavior be worthy of those who are pledged to Christ.*”⁴

What Is The Walk Required?

In this immediate context Paul names at least four things that “becometh” the gospel of Christ (or the walk required). The word “becometh” means “*having the same weight of (weighing as much as) another thing.*” It means of “*like value, worth as much as.*” It also means “*befitting, congruous, corresponding.*”

The saints are to see to it that their manner of life weighs as much as the gospel they profess to believe, or their words will not have weight. That which gives weight to a Christian’s words is the fact that his manner of life befits, is congruous to, corresponds with the gospel he preaches.⁵

First, the Christian is to be steadfast “...*that ye stand fast in one spirit...*” The idea of a good foothold is conspicuous. It means to stand firm and hold one’s ground in the face of all opposition. Emphasis on steadfastness rings throughout Paul’s writings. “...*that ye may be able to withstand in the evil day, and having done all, to stand*” (Eph. 6:13), “...*so stand fast in the Lord...*” (Phil. 4:1).

Second, there must be unity and cooperation “...*with one mind striving together for the faith of the gospel*” (Phil. 1:27). The verb **synathleo** is found only in this epistle (cf. 4:3). “*It is a compound of syn (“with” or “together”) and athleo (“to be an athlete, contend in games”).*”⁶ It means Christians are “*to strive at the same time with another*” (Thayer). They are to be “*joined in conflict for the faith of the Gospel*” (Berkeley). They are “*contending as one man for the faith of the gospel*” (NIV).

Third, Christians are to be courageous. “*And in nothing terrified (“affrighted,” ASV) by your adversaries...*” (Phil. 1:28a).

The origin of the word translated **affrighted** suggests the behavior of a horse when it becomes scared, springs aside or dashes off wildly. It is an expression of panic and dismay; as if one should say, “It is vain to resist, the enemy is too strong.”⁷

Courage is defined as:

The attitude or response of facing and dealing with anything recognized as dangerous, difficult, or painful, instead of withdrawing from it: the quality of being fearless or brave; valor, pluck.

Courage becometh the child of God. David faced Goliath without fear because God was with him (I Sam. 17:45-47). Courage showed in the faces of Shadrach, Meshach and Abednego when they told Nebuchadnezzar “...*we will not serve thy gods, nor worship the golden image which thou hast set up*” (Dan. 3:16-18). It inflamed the apostles who told the Sanhedrin, “...*we ought to obey God rather than men*” (Acts 5:29). We must meet our “opponents without so much as a tremor” (NEB). Such courage is an evident “*token of perdition*” to the adversaries, but a token of salvation to the Christian and “*that of God.*”

Fourth, suffering for Christ is a part of the life of a Christian,

For unto you it is given in the behalf of Christ, not only to believe on him, but also to suffer for his sake (Phil. 1:29).

Christians are not provided with some special immunity from pain and problems. The biblical doctrine of pain and suffering “*clashes with much superficial sentiments of our day...of the gospel of health and wealth.*”⁸ “*Clearly many professed Christians need to experience that shift*

of attitude from assuming that wherever the Lord is, there is no suffering, to believing that wherever there is suffering, then the Lord is."⁹

Blessed are they which are persecuted for righteousness' sake: for theirs is the kingdom of heaven. Blessed are ye, when men shall revile you, and persecute you, and shall say all manner of evil against you falsely, for my sake. Rejoice, and be exceeding glad: for great is your reward in heaven: for so persecuted they the prophets which were before you (Matt. 5:10-12).

And they departed from the presence of the council, rejoicing that they were counted worthy to suffer shame for his name (Acts 5:41).

Confirming the souls of the disciples, and exhorting them to continue in the faith, and that we must through much tribulation enter into the kingdom of God (Acts 14:22).

Yea, and all that will live godly in Christ Jesus shall suffer persecution (II Tim. 3:12).

And ye have forgotten the exhortation which speaketh unto you as unto children, My son, despise not thou the chastening of the Lord, nor faint when thou art rebuked of him: For whom the Lord loveth he chasteneth, and scourgeth every son whom he receiveth. If ye endure chastening, God dealeth with you as with sons; for what son is he whom the father chasteneth not? But if ye be without chastisement, whereof all are partakers, then are ye bastards, and not sons. Furthermore we have had fathers of our flesh which corrected us, and we gave them reverence:

shall we not much rather be in subjection unto the Father of spirits, and live? For they verily for a few days chastened us after their own pleasure; but he for our profit, that we might be partakers of his holiness. Now no chastening for the present seemeth to be joyous, but grievous: nevertheless afterward it yieldeth the peaceable fruit of righteousness unto them which are exercised thereby (Heb. 12:5-11).

Christians are to “...*walk in newness of life*” (Rom. 6:4). In repentance, we died to the love and practice of sin. In baptism, we became dead to the guilt of sin. We have put off the old man and we have put on the new man, therefore we are to walk as a new man (Eph. 4:17-32).

Christians are to “*walk honestly*” (“*becomingly*,” ASV) (Rom. 13:13). “*Becomingly*” means “*pleasing, decent, becoming, of high standing and influence.*” Christians are walking toward the heavenly city and must guard their influence.

Christians must walk “*worthy.*”

I therefore, the prisoner of the Lord, beseech you that ye walk worthy of the vocation wherewith ye are called (Eph. 4:1).

That ye might walk worthy of the Lord unto all pleasing, being fruitful in every good work, and increasing in the knowledge of God (Col. 1:10).

That ye would walk worthy of God, who hath called you unto his kingdom and glory (I Thess. 2:12).

Christians are to “*walk in the light*” in order to please God and have the assurance needed to sustain one through life.

But if we walk in the light, as he is in the light, we have fellowship one with another, and the blood of Jesus Christ his Son cleanseth us from all sin. If we say that we have no sin, we deceive ourselves, and the truth is not in us. If we confess our sins, he is faithful and just to forgive us our sins, and to cleanse us from all unrighteousness (I John 1:7-9).

John reveals two results that follow from “*walking in the light*” (literally “*If we keep on walking in the light...*”): (1) we have fellowship with each other; (2) the blood of Christ cleanses us from all sin.

“Cleanseth” is from the verb **katharizei**, in the present tense, thus revealing that it is a constant process, conditioned on our walking in the light. As we thus walk the blood operates to keep us constantly cleansed from the defilement of sin and the condemnation which attends it.¹⁰

Christians must not walk “disorderly” as some were doing in Thessalonica.

Now we command you, brethren, in the name of our Lord Jesus Christ, that ye withdraw yourselves from every brother that walketh disorderly, and not after the tradition which he received of us...For we hear that there are some which walk among you disorderly, working not at all, but are busybodies (II Thess. 3:6, 11).

The Bible clearly teaches that those who “*walk disorderly*” (a manner of life) are to have fellowship withdrawn from them. God’s word clearly outlines the steps to be followed in this effort (cf. I Cor. 5:1-13; Matt. 18:15-18; II Thess. 3:6-15).

Our Manner Of Life Is In Heaven

For our conversation is in heaven; from whence also we look for the Saviour, the Lord Jesus Christ: Who shall change our vile body, that it may be fashioned like unto his glorious body, according to the working whereby he is able even to subdue all things unto himself (Phil. 3:20-21).

In Philippians 3:17-19 Paul warns against the “*enemies of the cross of Christ.*” Clearly seeing the contrast between the “*enemies of the cross*” (the counterfeit) and the true circumcision will help us to realize what privileged citizens we are.

(1) The true circumcision worships “by the Spirit of God” (3:3), but their (i.e., the Judaizers) “god is the belly” (3:19).

(2) The authentic Israel of God glories “in Christ Jesus” (3:3), but their “glory” is “in their shame” (3:19).

(3) The true, spiritual Israel has “no confidence in the flesh” (3:3), but they “mind earthly things” (3:19).¹¹

What a contrast: “*For our citizenship is in heaven....*” “*We are a colony of heaven*” (Moffatt):

Here was a picture the Philippians could understand. Philippi was a Roman colony. These Roman colonies were amazing places. Here and there at strategic military centres the Romans set down their colonies. They were not like modern colonies out in the unexplored wilds; they commanded great road centres, the passes across the hilly routes by which the armies must march. In such places the Romans

set down colonies, whose citizens were mostly soldiers who had served their time—twenty-one years—and who has been rewarded with full citizenship. Now the great characteristics of these Roman colonies was that, wherever they were, they remained fragments of Rome. No matter where they were, Roman dress was worn; Roman magistrates governed them; the Latin tongue was spoken; Roman justice was administered; Roman morals were observed. Even in the ends of the earth these colonies remained unshakably and unalterably Roman. So Paul says to the Philippians, “Just as the Roman colonists never forget that they belong to Rome, you must never forget that you are citizens of heaven; and your conduct must match your citizenship.” Wherever the Christian is, his conduct must prove he is a citizen of the kingdom of heaven.¹²

As citizens of heaven our conduct is regulated by the rules of heaven and people sometimes think we are “*mad*” (Acts 26:24) or, at least, “*strange*” (I Peter 4:4).

Philippians 3:20-21 has been “*helpfully outlined as follows: (1) The sure return; (2) the splendid redemption and (3) the sufficient resource.*”¹³

First, let’s look at the sure return. At Jesus’ ascension the angels said,

...this same Jesus, which is taken up from you into heaven, shall so come in like manner as ye have seen him go into heaven (Acts 1:11).

Jesus Himself had announced, “*...I will come again, and receive you unto myself...*” (John 14:3). Peter emphatically asserts “*...the day of the Lord will come...*” (II Peter 3:10), in answer to scoffers who asked, “*...Where is the promise of his coming...*” (II Peter 3:3-6).

The Aramaic term **Maranatha** (meaning “The Lord come”) was used as a word of greeting or parting by early Christian (cf. I Cor. 16:22). It was not spoken with a sense of dread or apprehension. It was uttered exultingly in a spirit of joyful expectation. Christ’s sure return undergirds the Christian’s confidences. It causes his heart to beat high with joy. It gives him an unwavering serenity in the midst of life’s changes.¹⁴

Second, he will fashion anew our “*vile body*” (“*the body of our humiliation*”)—what splendid redemption. The body is included in the total redemptive process (I Thess. 5:23; I Cor. 6:14; 15:50-57). Paul speaks of the “*...redemption of our body*” (Rom. 8:23). This body will be raised and changed so as to be suited for heaven itself.

But some man will say, How are the dead raised up? and with what body do they come? Thou fool, that which thou sowest is not quickened, except it die: And that which thou sowest, thou sowest not that body that shall be, but bare grain, it may chance of wheat, or of some other grain: But God giveth it a body as it hath pleased him, and to every seed his own body. All flesh is not the same flesh: but there is one kind of flesh of men, another flesh of beasts, another of fishes, and another of birds. There are also celestial bodies, and bodies terrestrial: but the glory of the celestial is one, and the glory of the terrestrial is another. There is one glory of the sun, and another glory of the moon, and another glory of the stars: for one star differeth from another star in glory. So also is the resurrection of the dead. It is sown in corruption; it is raised in

incorruption: It is sown in dishonour; it is raised in glory: it is sown in weakness; it is raised in power: It is sown a natural body; it is raised a spiritual body. There is a natural body, and there is a spiritual body (I Cor. 15:35-44).

A body locked by limitations, fettered by frailty, pursued by pain, and doomed to die will be raised to glory and immortality. In this way “the splendid redemption” will come to consummation.¹⁵

Third, our text reveals “*the sufficient resource.*” “...according to the working whereby he is able even to subdue all things unto himself.” **Energein** is the word for “working” here. It is related to our English word “energy.” It is the inspired word for the divine activity and power. Moule says “*The ‘working’ is the positive putting forth of the already present ‘ability.’*”¹⁶ Christ who created all things (John 1:3; Col. 1:13-16), and who is able to call all from the grave (John 5:28-29), is also able to change our bodies.

And what is the exceeding greatness of his power to us-ward who believe, according to the working of his mighty power (Eph. 1:19).

True Contentment Is In Christ

But I rejoiced in the Lord greatly, that now at the last your care of me hath flourished again; wherein ye were also careful, but ye lacked opportunity. Not that I speak in respect of want: for I have learned, in whatsoever state I am, therewith to be content. I know both how to be abased, and I know how to abound: every where and in all things I am instructed

both to be full and to be hungry, both to abound and to suffer need. I can do all things through Christ which strengtheneth me (Phil. 4:10-13).

The Greek word **autarkes** (found only here in the New Testament) “*means sufficient in oneself (autos, self, arkeo,...), self-sufficient, adequate, needing no assistance.*”¹⁷ Vincent writes:

A stoic word, expressing the favorite of the sect, that man should be sufficient to himself for all things; able, by the power of his own will, to resist the shock of circumstances. Paul is self-sufficient through the power of the new self: not he, but Christ in him.¹⁸

Paul was self-sufficient because “*I can do all things through Christ which strengtheneth me*” (Phil. 4:13). It literally means “*infuses strength in me.*”¹⁹ Paul said he was “*God-sufficient.*” Paul does not say that he is content under all circumstances because of his strength or wisdom, but he can endure all things because of the strength Christ gives. Paul was in prison at Rome and all men had forsaken him, but he wrote Timothy:

Notwithstanding the Lord stood with me, and strengthened me... (II Tim. 4:17).

The LORD is my strength and my shield; my heart trusted in him, and I am helped: therefore my heart greatly rejoiceth; and with my song will I praise him. The LORD is their strength, and he is the saving strength of his anointed (Psm. 28:7-8).

That he would grant you, according to the riches of his glory, to be strengthened with might by his Spirit in the inner man; That Christ may dwell in your hearts by faith; that

ye, being rooted and grounded in love (Eph. 3:16-17).

Paul said, "*I have learned...to be content.*" Paul, like all of us, was in changing circumstances, but he was not at the mercy of circumstances. Circumstances were not conducive to singing and praying at midnight in jail (Acts 16:25), but he was not at the mercy of circumstances. Paul told Timothy:

But godliness with contentment is great gain. For we brought nothing into this world, and it is certain we can carry nothing out. And having food and raiment let us be therewith content (I Tim. 6:6-8).

In order to be content amidst changing circumstances one must learn three lessons. First, one must put his trust in Him who changes not (Heb. 13:8). Those who put their trust in the things of the world will be dissatisfied when they change. Second, one must learn to value the things that are unseen and eternal above the things that are seen and temporal.

While we look not at the things which are seen, but at the things which are not seen: for the things which are seen are temporal; but the things which are not seen are eternal (II Cor. 4:18).

The individual who places his values in temporal things will be highly upset when these things are removed.

But the individual who values most highly the things which are spiritual and unseen, the things that are eternal, will not lose the things he so highly values, and consequently can be content at all times because he has his abiding values at all times.²⁰

Third, one must learn that life does not consist in abundance of the temporal things we possess. If that is life to an individual then he is not content until he has them and will become increasingly irritable if he loses them.

But the individual who learns that life consists of union with God in Christ can have this union and the joys that come from it at all times regardless of the circumstances and environment in which he finds himself.²¹

Conclusion

The Christian looks forward to the day he will enjoy the immediate presence of God, Christ and the Holy Spirit. This motivates the Christian to walk daily according to God’s will, to experience the joy of such a walk, and to look upward to that heavenly home. The Christian knows that his citizenship is in heaven which never changes. What contentment comes to the heart of one grounded in these great truths!

Endnotes

1 All quotes are from the King James Version unless otherwise noted.

2 W. E. Vine, **An Expository Dictionary Of New Testament Words** (Westwood, NJ: Fleming H. Revell Co., 1962), p. 195.

3 Ralph Earle, **Word Meanings In The New Testament** (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Book House, 1994), p. 333.

4 William Barclay, **The Letters To The Philippians, Colossians, And Thessalonians** (Philadelphia, PA: The Westminster Press, 1959), p. 36.

5 Kenneth S. Wuest, **Philippians** (Grand Rapids, MI: Wm. B. Eerdmans Publishing Co., 1970), p. 51.

6 Earle, op. cit., p. 334.

7 F. B. Meyer, **The Epistle To The Philippians** (Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan Pub. House, 1952), p. 51.

8 Avon Malone, **Press To The Prize** (Nashville, TN: 20th Century Christian, 1991), pp. 45, 47.

9 Fred B. Craddock, **Philippians, Interpretation: A Bible Commentary For Teaching And Preaching** (Atlanta, GA: John Knox Press, 1985), p. 25.

10 Guy N. Woods, **A Commentary On The New Testament Epistles Of Peter, John, And Jude** (Nashville, TN: Gospel Advocate Co., 1954), p. 217.

11 Malone, op. cit., p. 96.

12 Barclay, op. cit., pp. 85-86.

13 Paul Rees, **The Epistle To The Colossians, Philippians And Philemon**, Proclaiming The New Testament (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Book House, 1964), p. 44.

14 Malone, op. cit., p. 97.

15 Ibid., p. 98.

16 H. G. Moule, **The Epistle Of Paul The Apostle To The Philippians** (Cambridge: University Press, 1903), p. 107.

17 Vine, op. cit., p. 234.

18 Marvin Vincent, **Word Studies In The New Testament**, "The Epistles of Paul" (Grand Rapids, MI: Wm. B. Eerdmans Pub. Co., 1965), Vol. III, pp. 459-600.

19 Ibid., p. 460.

20 **Annual Lesson Commentary** (Nashville, TN: Gospel Advocate Co., 1955), p. 134.

21 Ibid., p. 134.

Chapter 4

“Followers Of Christ” “Blameless” “The Sons Of God”

• Philippians 3:17; 2:15 •

Roger Banks



Roger is a graduate of Alabama Christian School of Religion (B.A., M.A.) • He has been preaching for over 25 years • Presently he works for the East Wood congregation in Paris, TN (since 1989) • Extensive radio work experience • A faithful defender of the faith, he is a frequent speaker on lectureships and in gospel meetings throughout our land • Roger and Sue have two sons.

The beautiful book of Philippians was written by the Apostle Paul from his Roman prison cell in A.D. 62 or 63. This book of four chapters and one hundred four verses is among the four “*Prison Epistles*,” the other three being Ephesians, Colossians, and Philemon.

It is easily recognized that this congregation of Christian people may very well be the most favored group of people in the life of the great apostle. The language that is employed in this letter leaves nothing to the imagination of the reader as to the tender love that Paul had for these people.

I am delighted to have the opportunity to be with you on this occasion, to be a part of the Ninth Annual **Truth In Love** Lectureship of the wonderful East Hill congregation. I am both honored and humbled by your invitation to speak on this occasion. I have a great personal respect for this congregation of God’s people

and those who lead her on a daily basis. It is a delight to again be in the company of my boyhood friend and fellow soldier of the cross of Christ, Paul Sain. Brother Sain does a wonderful work in preaching the unsearchable riches of Christ on a daily basis and in directing this annual lectureship.

It is my wonderful privilege this evening to address two passages from the great writings of Paul the Apostle to the Philippians. In Philippians 2:15 Paul states:

That ye may be blameless and harmless, the sons of God, without rebuke, in the midst of a crooked and perverse nation, among whom ye shine as lights in the world.

Again in 3:17 the great writer of the New Testament states: *“Brethren, be followers together of me, and mark them which walk so as ye have us for an ensample.”*

Paul has just encouraged the Philippian brethren to do their work in the Lord without murmuring and disputing in verse fourteen of chapter two. This would greatly enable them to reach the desired objective of being blameless and harmless, the Sons of God. Please notice; Paul is not requiring these people to be sinlessly perfect, but to be blameless and harmless. In Titus 1:6, in the very first *“qualification”* for an elder, Paul stated that the man should be *“blameless.”* Therefore, not only are elders required to be blameless, all who wear Christ’s name should be blameless according to Philippians 2:15. It is not possible for any of us to be sinlessly perfect, but we can be blameless. To be blameless is to be in the position that any accusation made against us could not have merit. Nothing of *“blame”* could be proved against us. God alone enables us to be blameless, without fault or stain.

Blameless And Harmless

Our everyday walk of life should be of the quality that we could be called blameless. It is said of Elisabeth and Zacharias,

...they were both righteous before God, walking in all the commandments and ordinances of the Lord blameless (Luke 1:6).

On the other hand, Paul withstood Peter to his face stating that he was to be blamed because he, on a certain occasion, shunned the Gentiles (Gal. 2:11).

Why, then are we required to be blameless and harmless? Simply stated, the 21st Century Church of Christ must be blameless and harmless just like the first Century Church in order to be successful in the dutiful work of evangelism. Christianity must be seen working in us before any would desire to be like us! No one wants to be a part of a church where its religion doesn't work! Changed lives! This is exactly the point that Paul is making to the Philippians. Their lives must reflect the point that Christianity has worked in them in order to influence anyone else.

There are two important points to consider. Paul has stated that each individual member of the Philippian church must be blameless and harmless, even without rebuke. The entire church needs to be markedly different from the rest of the world. If it is no different from the world, what is its purpose? One of the major problems in religion today is that not enough difference can be noted between the church and the world. The problem is not that the world is so much like the church; but that the church is so much like the world! To be blameless and harmless is to be distinctively different from the world. Jesus tells the twelve disciples in

Matthew 10:16,

Behold, I send you forth as sheep in the midst
of wolves: be ye therefore wise as serpents,
and harmless as doves.

The Lord is making every attempt to equip His people to perform their Christian duties in a place that would resent and accuse them of every type of evil activity. In our own personal attempts to be blameless and harmless today, we should be constantly reminded of the continuing need to be "*as wise as serpents, as harmless as doves.*" Of the many things that members of the Lord's church are accused today, seldom are we accused of being as "*wise as serpents and as harmless as doves.*"

There are many very difficult situations that would have been made more bearable if we had made extra efforts to be known as "*wise and harmless*" people. How many "*church problems*" can you bring to mind that would not have been easier to deal with if we had practiced the Lord's admonition to be "*wise and harmless.*" Our Lord would have us to show a disposition of life that one could not rebuke. Paul states in 2:15 that as the sons of God we should be without rebuke. No accusation should stand against us. Our behavior pattern of every day living should be our strongest evidence that we are cautious, careful and loving creatures.

There is no doubt about it. There is a way to preach the truth of Jesus Christ in a way that is filled with love, care and concern for the hearer. Paul knew this as he encouraged the Ephesian brethren to preach "*...the truth in love...*" (Eph. 4:15).

The Great Task Of Philippians 2:15

Our task is not an easy one! Our major objective

as members of the Body of Christ is simply to be the Sons of God in the midst of a crooked and perverse nation. In relation to our duty in our time, each man, woman and young person today who wears the precious name of Christ should be reminded of the pivotal passage in the book of Esther. Mordecai made this wonderful statement to Esther in chapter four and verse fourteen: “...and who knoweth whether thou art come to the kingdom for such a time as this.” Mordecai was trying to impress Esther with her great opportunity and duty to save the Jews from destruction.

We live in a wonderful, yet fearful time! Our duty is exactly that of the First Century Christian people that we read about in the Bible. We are to preach Jesus and Him crucified. We are to live our lives in such a way that will encourage other people to want to be like us. We are placed here, now, to do the work of our Lord Jesus Christ. What if the disciples of the first century had not fulfilled their spiritual responsibilities? What if we, as modern day disciples, do not fulfill our spiritual responsibilities? The results are the same. We have the same duty and mission as our brethren of two thousand years ago. We are responsible for carrying the gospel of Christ to a lost and dying world! What a mission! What a mission field!

The following statement may seem to be understated. We do live in a crooked and perverse nation! We are in the place where we are needed the most. Our own personally elected President of these United States of America is leading us in a manner of life that resembles the most shameless soap opera ever permitted on public television. The most visible leader in the world is known as a liar, perjurer, and as a sexual pervert! We DO live in a crooked and perverse nation! This nation

is so crooked and perverse that even when presented the horrid evidence that has even been produced against a standing president, America didn't care! America does not care today! Bill Clinton has the highest popularity percentage of any American president in the latter part of the second term. One of the most sexually defiled is the most popular. We should think twice before condemning the Corinthians for their lack of conviction in moving against the fornicator in chapter five of the first book. In I Corinthians 5:1-2 we read:

It is reported commonly that there is fornication among you, and such fornication as is not so much as named among the Gentiles, that one should have his father's wife. And ye are puffed up, and have not rather mourned, that he that hath done this deed might be taken away from among you.

In this crooked and perverse nation, what kind of moral lesson are our public officials teaching our younger generations? My friends, we have come to the Kingdom *"for such a time as this."*

America is the country that is guilty of the blood of over 35,000,000 million aborted babies! We stood in rank horror in the 1930's as Hitler was accused of killing millions of Jews! We were up in arms and rightly so! Why not now? We are a crooked and perverse nation! The blood of millions of unborn innocents cry to the Father against us! I cannot think of any country in the entire world that needs the example of pure Christian lives any more than our very own United States of America! Hear again the words of the Apostle Paul:

That ye may be blameless and harmless, the sons of God, without rebuke, in the midst of a crooked and perverse nation, among whom ye shine as lights in the world.

We are exactly in the position where we are the most needed; right in the middle of America! Now what is our duty? To be harmless, blameless, without rebuke, and to shine as lights in this world! What a mission! What a mission field!

The children of God can be without blemish while they are living in the very midst of people who are perverse in their lifestyle, rebellious in their spirit, caring nothing for the rule of living as laid down by their Master. Paul wrote to Titus instructing him how to live in the world in his day. In Titus 2:11-12 Paul states:

For the grace of God that bringeth salvation hath appeared to all men, Teaching us that, denying ungodliness and worldly lusts, we should live soberly, righteously, and godly, in this present world.

This remains the most needed order of the day. People who will purposely live soberly, righteously and godly in this world. It is greatly desired that God have a people that can live without blemish in the midst of people whose view of life and their general rule of conduct are seemingly always wrong. God needs a people who can be rightminded, straightforward, whose goals and ambitions are the right kind of examples for others to follow to eternal life. This, my friend, is the mission of the church!

Shining As Lights In The World

It was the clearly defined duty of the New Testament church in the 1st Century to shine as lights in the world by holding forth in their lives the clearly stated example that they had been taught by the Word of God. In the long ago, David in Psalms 119:105 stated: *“Thy word is a lamp unto my feet, and a light unto my*

path.” Jesus without reservation, gives us our marching orders in Matthew 5:13-16.

Ye are the salt of the earth: but if the salt have lost his savour, wherewith shall it be salted? it is thenceforth good for nothing, but to be cast out, and to be trodden under foot of men. Ye are the light of the world. A city that is set on an hill cannot be hid. Neither do men light a candle, and put it under a bushel, but on a candlestick; and it giveth light unto all that are in the house. Let your light so shine before men, that they may see your good works, and glorify your Father which is in heaven.

In both instances of Psalms 119:105 and Matthew 5:13-16 the idea is of reflected light. The light of Christ should be reflected by, through, and in His followers. Christ is the source of the light, not His followers. As noted in John 1:4-11, Jesus is the source:

In him was life; and the life was the light of men. And the light shineth in darkness; and the darkness comprehended it not. There was a man sent from God, whose name was John. The same came for a witness, to bear witness of the Light, that all men through him might believe. He was not that Light, but was sent to bear witness of that Light. That was the true Light, which lighteth every man that cometh into the world. He was in the world, and the world was made by him, and the world knew him not. He came unto his own, and his own received him not.

We, as the children, are the “*reflectors*” of the light of Christ. The power is not in reflection, but in the original source of the Light. We, therefore, are to shine as reflectors of the light of Christ. There is a great need,

as in the words of an old song, for Christian people everywhere to *“brighten the corner where you are!”*

In order to be the *“sons of God...in the midst of a crooked and perverse nation, among whom we shine as lights in the world,”* we must accurately reflect the illuminating light of Christ. Perhaps no passage more clearly defines our duty in this particular area as that of Philippians 2:5, *“Let this mind be in you, which was also in Christ Jesus.”* Really now, how much like Christ are we? Do we speak like Christ speaks? Do we act like Christ acts? Do we think like Christ thinks? If in fact we are Christlike, all the above questions can and should be answered with a resounding YES! We are to shine as lights in a dark place.

Shine As Lights Through Genuine Love

There is no greater way for us as Christian people to shine as lights in the world as through the opportunity to teach a lost and dying world of the love that we have for each other IN Christ. The world is lust-filled and love-starved. The world is quite literally filled with children and parents who know nothing of real love. Their world is filled with lust, sex, violence, quarreling and fighting. Everything but love. Jesus recognized the tremendous need for love as the real thing as he instructed his disciples in John 13:34-35:

A new commandment I give unto you, That ye love one another; as I have loved you, that ye also love one another. By this shall all men know that ye are my disciples, if ye have love one to another.

Can you imagine the anticipation that must have been present among the disciples as Jesus spoke of a *“new commandment?”* When they heard it, it was not entirely

new. After all, this was not the first time that Jesus had spoken on the subject of brotherly love. There was however a new “*twist*” to the commandment. They not only were to love one another, they were to love one another as Christ had loved them! In the first part of chapter thirteen, Jesus had been seen on His knees washing the feet of His disciples. Ponder this “*new*” commandment and its result. The new commandment was for them to love each other as they had been loved by Christ. For the record, John 13:1 states that Christ “*...having loved his own which were in the world, he loved them unto the end.*” This is simply one of the greatest statements of the entire Word of God!

We can seize the opportunity to “*shine as lights in the world*” when we have the proper attitude toward our brothers and sisters in Christ. In Matthew 24:45, those on the left hand had learned the sober lesson that: “*...Inasmuch as ye did it not to one of the least of these, ye did it not to me.*” Believe this! The world sits up and takes notice of how we treat each other IN Jesus Christ! We can shine as lights in the world when we have the proper attitude toward our brethren. Would you want to be part of any organization that gossips and rumors about their own? Would you want to be a part of any group that clearly does not respect or trust each other? Would you desire membership in any congregation of the Church that does not have the proper feelings for its members? There must be something IN the church that draws people TO the church. WE are that something. It is vitally important that we live as people that have been redeemed by the blood of Christ and have the proper attitude for one another.

Jesus was not mistaken in the idea that there is a sure way to impress the watching world with the purity

of the church. Love one another! As a matter of fact, the greatest single piece of public relation material that can be used by all concerned is the never failing fact that people recognize love when they see it. Jesus was aware of this in John 13:35 when He stated: *“By this shall all men know that ye are my disciples, if ye have love one to another.”*

The gentle creature, John, in I John 3:10-15 speaks directly to the point.

In this the children of God are manifest, and the children of the devil: whosoever doeth not righteousness is not of God, neither he that loveth not his brother. For this is the message that ye heard from the beginning, that we should love one another. Not as Cain, who was of that wicked one, and slew his brother. And wherefore slew he him? Because his own works were evil, and his brother's righteous. Marvel not, my brethren, if the world hate you. We know that we have passed from death unto life, because we love the brethren. He that loveth not his brother abideth in death. Whosoever hateth his brother is a murderer: and ye know that no murderer hath eternal life abiding in him.

Again in I John 4:8, 10:12:

He that loveth not knoweth not God; for God is love...Herein is love, not that we loved God, but that he loved us, and sent his Son to be the propitiation for our sins. Beloved, if God so loved us, we ought also to love one another. No man hath seen God at any time. If we love one another, God dwelleth in us, and his love is perfected in us.

The point is clearly made. We shine as lights in the

world when we love each other the way that Christ our Lord loved us!

We Must Shine Through Forgiveness

In His wonderful sermon in Matthew 6, just after Jesus taught the disciples the model prayer, He immediately taught them the importance of forgiveness. In 6:14-15 Jesus says:

For if ye forgive men their trespasses, your heavenly Father will also forgive you: But if ye forgive not men their trespasses, neither will your Father forgive your trespasses.

The case is clearly stated that unless and until we forgive those that sin against us, we do not have the right to ask God to forgive us of our sins. Someone has adequately stated that when we refuse to forgive others, we destroy the very bridge over which we must pass in order to be forgiven.

The constant theme of forgiveness is sounded throughout the entire New Testament. In Luke 17:3-4 Jesus teaches:

Take heed to yourselves: If thy brother trespass against thee, rebuke him; and if he repent, forgive him. And if he trespass against thee seven times in a day, and seven times in a day turn again to thee, saying, I repent; thou shalt forgive him.

It cannot be made any plainer than that. To forgive our brethren is one of the Lord's "*thou shalt*" commandments.

In Matthew 18 Jesus sets forth the principle that we are to approach our brother when he sins against us. Jesus states in 18:15-17:

Moreover if thy brother shall trespass against thee, go and tell him his fault between thee

and him alone: if he shall hear thee, thou hast gained thy brother. But if he will not hear thee, then take with thee one or two more, that in the mouth of two or three witnesses every word may be established. And if he shall neglect to hear them, tell it unto the church: but if he neglect to hear the church, let him be unto thee as an heathen man and a publican.

In this particular passage it is a foregone conclusion that forgiveness is the order if the erring brother should repent of his wrongdoing. Paul, in Ephesians 4:32 sets forth our duty in the matter of forgiveness:

And be ye kind one to another, tenderhearted, forgiving one another, even as God for Christ's sake hath forgiven you.

Again, in Colossians 3:12-15,

Put on therefore, as the elect of God, holy and beloved, bowels of mercies, kindness, humbleness of mind, meekness, longsuffering; Forbearing one another, and forgiving one another, if any man have a quarrel against any: even as Christ forgave you, so also do ye. And above all these things put on charity, which is the bond of perfectness. And let the peace of God rule in your hearts, to the which also ye are called in one body; and be ye thankful.

Nothing darkens the area around us as quickly as an unforgiving spirit. We need to let the world see in us the very ability that Jesus Christ has to forgive all of our sins. The matter is relatively simple. There is going to be a need to exercise the Christlike trait of forgiveness as long as we dwell together upon the earth. As long as

there are people, there will be a constant and continuing need to forgive each other. Where better to learn the fine art of forgiveness than in the precious Body of Christ, the church of Christ. When the people of the world see that we indeed are forgiving of each other, they will want to be a part of the forgiving body. The one thing that we all have in common is the need to forgive and to be forgiven. The better we are at being forgiven, the better we should be at forgiveness.

We Shine As We Worship Our Lord

One of the clearest indications that we are the Sons of God in the midst of a crooked and perverse nation, among whom we are to shine as lights, is to be seen in our worship. God has never been misunderstood in the way that He wants us to feel about Him! In Exodus 20:3; God clearly states to Moses, "*Thou shalt have no other gods before me.*" Jehovah God meant it exactly as He stated the matter. Nothing, nothing, should come before Him. He **MUST** be first in our lives. If He is first in our lives, it is never more clearly indicated than in our worship of Him! In Matthew 23, as the lawyer questioned Jesus about the great commandment in the law, Jesus spoke the following words in verses 37-40:

Jesus said unto him, Thou shalt love the Lord thy God with all thy heart, and with all thy soul, and with all thy mind. This is the first and great commandment. And the second is like unto it, Thou shalt love thy neighbour as thyself. On these two commandments hang all the law and the prophets.

Can we, by any stretch of the imagination, love God with all our heart, soul, and mind and not be faithful to worship Him? Certainly not! Can we argue the fact

that we love God with all our soul, mind and heart with half-filled church houses all over America standing in testimony against us? The Hebrew writer in 10:22-25 states:

Let us draw near with a true heart in full assurance of faith, having our hearts sprinkled from an evil conscience, and our bodies washed with pure water. Let us hold fast the profession of our faith without wavering; (for he is faithful that promised;) And let us consider one another to provoke unto love and to good works: Not forsaking the assembling of ourselves together, as the manner of some is; but exhorting one another: and so much the more, as ye see the day approaching.

It has not been any clearer stated anywhere in the New Testament; it is a grievous error to wilfully absent oneself from the worship services of the church. One cannot be faithful to Christ and refuse to worship Him on a regular basis. I have personally never known an individual who was faithful to Christ in every other aspect of Christian service and wilfully absented himself from public worship. As a matter of fact, it is clearly seen in the lives of Christ professing people that if they are NOT faithful to attend the worship services (other than being hindered by health or other reasons) as a general rule, they are not faithful in any aspect of Christian service. Whether we like to admit it or not, our attendance record is an adequate spiritual barometer of our life of service to Christ.

Please consider for a moment just what an opportunity we have to “*shine as lights in the world*” before an observing public in this simple area of service. People judge our relationship with Christ by the way we attend the worship services. In every congregation

there exists a “roll” of people that are faithful to attend in spite of physical hindrances. Do you not consider these who come in spite of physical limitations more “*faithful*” than those who are not hindered at all? If we, from the inside view, consider some more faithful than others, do you not think that those who view from without make the same observations? As a matter of fact, elders, preachers and church members alike begin their spiritual assessment of any individual by their attendance record. If we can do little else in the realm of public service, we can all be faithful to attend every service of the church unless we are hindered by circumstances beyond our control.

Several years ago there was a popular excuse given for non-attendance. Someone would ultimately use the old stand-by, “*I was providentially hindered from going to worship.*” I’m sorry! I do not buy into the excuse that God would “*providentially hinder*” any one from worshipping Him! Think! Providence, means that “*it is of God.*” Hinder, means to purposefully place someone or something in our path to detour or stop our progress. Therefore, to providentially hinder, means that God purposefully places someone or something in front of us to detour or stop our progress in worshipping Him! Not so! He encourages our worship in every way. Please note the wonderful passage in the book of John where Jesus engages the Samaritan woman in conversation about worshipping God. John 4:19-24 records the following conversation:

The woman saith unto him, Sir, I perceive that thou art a prophet. Our fathers worshipped in this mountain; and ye say, that in Jerusalem is the place where men ought to worship. Jesus saith unto her, Woman, believe me, the hour

cometh, when ye shall neither in this mountain, nor yet at Jerusalem, worship the Father. Ye worship ye know not what: we know what we worship: for salvation is of the Jews. But the hour cometh, and now is, when the true worshippers shall worship the Father in spirit and in truth: for the Father seeketh such to worship him. God is a Spirit: and they that worship him must worship him in spirit and in truth.

Now, a single argument from the aforementioned passage. *“The Father seeketh such to worship him.”* Does God simultaneously seek and hinder our worship? Certainly not. In the very act of public worship we have a wonderful opportunity to *“shine as lights in the world.”*

Philippians 3:17

Paul encourages the Christians at Philippi to observe this rather unusual request: *“Brethren, be followers together of me, and mark them which walk so as ye have us for an ensample.”* This is not the first time Paul has requested people to follow his personal example. In I Corinthians 11:1 he makes the identical request of the Corinthian church. *“Be ye followers of me, even as I also am of Christ.”*

This faithful soldier is confident enough of his personal example to encourage others to live the way he has lived. We need more of this type of confidence today. This is a far cry from the old saying of *“Do as I say, and not as I do.”* Here, Paul is encouraging the readers to do as he does.

Please note the fact that Paul has encouraged the people at Philippi to mark the individuals that were setting a good example among them. This word **skopeo** in the Greek means *“to look at, behold, watch, to*

contemplate.” It is the same word as used in Romans 16:17,

Now I beseech you, brethren, mark them which cause divisions and offences contrary to the doctrine which ye have learned; and avoid them.

The point in Romans 16:17 is to set the eye upon them and avoid them; is to call attention and deliberately NOT follow their example. The case in Philippians 3:17 is to focus upon them and to follow their examples.

Brethren, it is vitally important to mark and avoid all appearances of those who oppose our Lord Jesus. It is equally important to mark and imitate those who set appropriate examples. It is usually the way of the world to notice and behold the most pitiful examples of some in the church, when we are encouraged to notice and behold the best examples of some in the church.

We SHOULD be noticing and marking the faithful in Christ Jesus and holding them up for the rest of the world to see as an example. This is exactly what Paul is asking us to do when he writes these two wonderful passages in the book of Philippians. Now, as we bring this study to an appropriate close, let us finally consider them side by side.

That ye may be blameless and harmless, the sons of God, without rebuke, in the midst of a crooked and perverse nation, among whom ye shine as lights in the world.

Brethren, be followers together of me, and mark them which walk so as ye have us for an ensample.

We have gathered this evening from many different walks of life. We differ socially, politically, physically

and perhaps most of all, spiritually. Let us be grateful to our Father in heaven that we have some of the very best examples in all of the New Testament church to hold before our eyes as patterns to live after and to emulate. It is quite unfair that the unruly always seem to make the largest headlines in the Body of Christ. That is not the way He would have it! He would have us to live our lives in such a way that others want to be like us, therefore like Him. There is no more appropriate passage to end this study with than that of Matthew 5:16:

Let your light so shine before men, that they
may see your good works, and glorify your
Father which is in heaven.

Amen and amen!

Chapter 5

“God Shall Supply” “Unto God Be Glory”

• Philippians 4:19-20 •

Bill Irby



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Paul wrote these words near the close of his letter to the Philippians: *“But my God shall supply all your need according to his riches in glory by Christ Jesus”* (Phil. 4:19 KJV). The Christians at Philippi had helped Paul in his work *“once and again”* (4:16). It was not just anyone doing anything that they had helped. They helped God’s man do the most essential work that any man can do, the work of preaching the Gospel of Christ. This distinction caused the things they did for Paul to be accounted as things done for the cause of Christ. They took care of God’s man doing God’s work; thus God would take care of them.

A Preliminary Matter: The Problem Of Materialism And The Question Of Need

But we must not see this as a **materialistic** quid pro quo. That which the Philippians had done for Paul was counted as *“an odour of a sweet smell, a sacrifice acceptable, well pleasing to God”* (4:18). It was seen as

a spiritual thing, not only or merely a material thing. Such is the case with all that the Christian does in service to God.

God does not need our material help in an absolute sense. He is the Creator. He spoke this material, physical world into existence. One day He will speak and it will not exist any longer, it will be “*dissolved*” (II Peter 3:9ff). Yet, even though He does not need us to do anything for Him, our work on His behalf and His great cause of salvation is desired and required.

Why? With every material thing we do as Christians there comes to us a spiritual blessing. Consider this principle in connection with prayer and study.

God does not need us to tell Him anything. To put it in plain language, He knows everything there is to know. Remember Isaiah 55:8-9:

For my thoughts are not your thoughts, neither are your ways my ways, saith the Lord. For as the heavens are higher than the earth, so are my ways higher than your ways, and my thoughts than your thoughts (KJV).

There is nothing I can think that He does not know as soon as I think it. There is nothing I can do that will surprise Him. This is the omniscience of God. To consider it is to overwhelm our finite little minds. Yet, He wants us to pray. He wants us to ask.

Why does He want us to pray? Is it not because in prayer we reveal ourselves to the Father as contrite and needy children? In prayer we show that we need Him. In prayer we show that we recognize our relationship to God as one of the submission of the lesser to the greater. Prayer brings us spiritual blessings that extend beyond prayer’s specific answer. Thus we are to “*Pray without*

ceasing” (I Thess. 5:17 KJV).

God wants us to learn. What are the blessings of study? We want to be approved workmen, and we must handle the Word correctly (II Tim. 2:15). But don't we know that we can know only so much of God's revealed Mind? We cannot know it all because the finite cannot apprehend the infinite. But to approach the Mind of God is to learn some things we must know. Man has the tendency to think that he is the center of the universe. To study the Book is to learn otherwise. The Bible reveals that we are weak creatures that are strong only when we bend our human will to the Divine (Eph. 6:10-17). Study brings us spiritual blessings beyond the certain benefit of knowing how we should live. Study makes us able to know that there is truth revealed from God's mind that transcends mere experience. Study provides the spiritual blessing of knowing this truth (John 8:32).

Based on these thoughts we can see that when Paul told the Philippians that God would supply all their need, that “*need*” was not merely material. The Philippians did what was right and they were blessed spiritually. For that they would glorify God (4:20). So should we.

The distinction between “*material*” and “*spiritual*” is fundamental. Most of the problems experienced by Christians and Christianity are due to confusion in this area. Christians must always be aware of this distinction. Paul spoke to this in II Corinthians 4:16-5:1:

For which cause we faint not; but though our outward man perish, yet the inward man is renewed day by day. For our light affliction, which is but for a moment, worketh for us a far more exceeding and eternal weight of glory;

while we look not at the things which are seen, but at the things which are not seen: for the things which are seen are temporal; but the things which are not seen are eternal. For we know that if our earthly house of this tabernacle were dissolved, we have a building of God, an house not made with hands, eternal in the heavens (KJV).

Under consideration here is the fact that human beings are not merely an amalgamation of material substance. There is an eternal aspect to every person, the soul. The soul, the inward man has the characteristic of eternity, the body does not.

The difference in the inward and outward man can be seen in the way the two are measured. The outward man can be measured with a tape and with a scale. He has a certain temperature, and his blood pressure is revealed on a machine designed to do so. The doctor can test the blood to see if there is too much cholesterol or not enough iron. But the inward man is not measured by such methods or tools. An old sermon says that the soul or inward man is measured by the height of its ambitions, the depth of its conviction, the length of its love, the breadth of its service, and the weight of its influence. The outward man will waste away one day (Heb. 9:27). Our physical beings may well be impaired for many years of our lives. But our inward man goes on. It grows (I Peter 2:2) and with proper care (Heb. 5:12-14) matures and becomes more worthy of its Creator (II Peter 1:5-8).

Materialism is the great enemy of the inward man. Materialism is worldliness. We have been warned to “*Love not the world, neither the things that are in the world.*” John went on to say that,

If any man love the world the love of the Father is not in him. For all that is in the world, the lust of the flesh, the lust of the eyes, and the pride of life, is not of the Father, but is of the world (I John 2:15-16).

The temporal nature of the world is seen in the fact that “...*the world passeth away, and the lust thereof; but he that doeth the will of God abideth forever*” (I John 2:17 KJV). Christians often come to believe that their great “needs” are material. Nothing could be further from the truth.

Indeed, there is to be a godly separation between the world and the child of God. Paul helps us understand that Christians are not like people of the world. He said,

Be ye not unequally yoked together with unbelievers: for what fellowship hath righteousness with unrighteousness? And what communion hath light with darkness? (II Cor. 6:14).

He went on to say,

Having therefore these promises, dearly beloved, let us cleanse ourselves from all filthiness of the flesh and spirit, perfecting holiness in the fear of God (II Cor. 7:1 KJV).

Nowhere is this distinction, this separation, more important than in understanding passages like Philippians 4:19-20. Now, we know that God takes care of us in all things (Matt. 6:24-34). We are blessed by Him physically and materially. But in our world, living in the times we do, what are the things for which we ought to be earnestly praying? What do we need?

The initial answer for most folks today runs to the consideration of one’s physical welfare. We need a house.

We need a car or two (or three?). We need a few more suits, shoes or outfits. We need a steak or some ice cream every once in a while. We need a nice balance in the 401k. We need just one more toy. If we are to maintain a godly separation between the world and ourselves and if the inward man is the more important and surely the eternal aspect of our existence, should we not make the effort to apply these principles to the matter of our needs?

What good is a house if the people in it do not love each other? What good is a house if the husband and wife do not care about each other and their children? What good is a house if the children there hate their parents? Now, if God is to supply all our needs, what do you think He should be supplying? Should He supply a house, a nice four-bedroom colonial with a study and a pool out back? Or would you rather He supply love, care, gentleness, and mercy to adorn a home, however modest it might be? People who pray for and work for a big fine house need to remember that the important thing is that the people who live in that house are inclined spiritually to godliness. I would suggest that the bank of God’s riches includes more deposits of love and care than mortgage money.

Continuing along this line, what good is a nice car if it is never used in the service of God? What good is it to be able to dress well if we adorn ourselves for ungodliness? What good did money itself ever do anyone (I Tim. 6:9-10)? What good is a fine diet if we never use the energy gained from it in service to the Lord? For the Christian there is a spiritual aspect to even the most mundane thing if it is to have a blessing. Such is the importance of the distinction of the material and spiritual, the temporal and eternal, the inward and the outward.

My God, Your Need, His Riches

When we turn again to Philippians 4:19, we find an intriguing use of pronouns that can provide a way to analyze the passage. Paul says **my** God. The pronoun is emphatic. Literally it is "*the God of me.*" Jehovah is Paul's God not only in terms of relationship, but also in terms of leadership.

We know that Paul was an inspired apostle and as such had gifts not available to us today. The leadership of God that he experienced was often direct in a fashion we cannot know. But we can be led by God today through His Word. The relationship with God that Paul experienced is likewise different than that available to us. Paul, as one born out of due season, was able to see the living, risen Lord Jesus Christ with one's physical eyes. We cannot do that. But we are to "*...walk by faith, not by sight*" (II Cor. 5:7 KJV). We have the evidence of the Word of God that creates that faith by which we then live (Rom. 10:17). Except for differences of this type, we can have the same relationship with God that Paul enjoyed. We can be baptized into Christ, to be raised to walk in newness of life. Paul said that's what he did (Rom. 6:1-6), and that is what we can do also.

Notice that by saying "**my God**," Paul was eliminating from consideration any other "*gods.*" The Philippians knew about the Greco-Roman pantheon of gods. We know that they were the mythical creations of the fertile mind of man. So did many Greeks of the age. But a distinction must be drawn, as was done by Paul in Athens, between false gods and the real God. An idol that a Greek would take home and put in a special place was no more the material creation of the sculptor than was the myth created by the pagan priest. Both were of this world. Neither had any power. No pagan deity can supply any need. Their needs must instead be attended

to. They must be cleaned. They must be repaired. Idolatry is an empty exercise.

Not many people today will buy a carved figure to take home to worship. But some do treat the one God as if He has been created. Others have subjected Christianity to the world. They have sought to modify the faith and adjust it to fit the times and their ever so trendy sensibilities. Sadly, many Christians have done this. And what they have done is little different from depending on a carved statue for blessings. Paul said that “*my God*” would do the blessing. Not a god we make up. And not some modified, post-modern version of the God of the Bible. He alone will bless for He alone is able to bless.

Notice also here that the text says that God will supply **your** need. It says **my** God and **your** need. We have established that this was the God of a Christian. Now, whom was He going to bless? Whose need would be supplied? Well, the letter is addressed to “*all the saints in Christ Jesus which are at Philippi*” (1:1) In addition verse 21 of chapter 4 reads “*Salute every saint in Christ Jesus.*” This supply of needs in this set of circumstances was designed for those who belonged to God. Now God blesses everyone with material blessings. The rain falls on the just and the unjust. And Christians are compelled to help anyone who comes in need. But it cannot be denied that there are some blessings that are designed for God’s children. Spiritual blessings are for those in Christ (Eph. 1:3). Redemption is a blessing for those in Christ (Eph. 1:7). Those who are not in the Family of God cannot expect to receive the blessings of the Father.

The fact that there are special blessings associated with Christianity ought to encourage people to study, believe and obey the gospel. But some do not want to

believe. As was said of Israel, “*So we see that they could not enter in because of unbelief*” (Heb. 3:19). Unbelief dooms a person to spiritual poverty.

The text also tells us that need would be supplied “...*according to his riches in glory by Christ Jesus*” (4:19). We can be sure that God will not run out. The text speaks of supplying or filling every need one might have. When we think of needing things here in this world, we can be concerned with running out. People have been known to hoard things to guard against being without. But God does not run out of what we really need. He has plenty. The word for riches here means wealth or a boundless abundance of something. God’s storehouse of riches is inexhaustible.

The construction “*in glory*” provides insight into the character of this wealth. The riches are of a particular type, that is, “*in glory.*” Though we may not be able to understand all that this means, we can perhaps approach its meaning. We know that the ultimate destiny of the Christian is to be with God. The glory of God refers to the magnificent brightness of His presence. We glorify God when we recognize that He is the One who is glorious. When we worship scripturally we reflect back to Him the glory He has shed on our way here.

In Colossians 3:2-4 Paul said,

Set your affections on things above, not on things on the earth. For ye are dead, and your life is hid with Christ in God. When Christ, who is our life, shall appear, then shall ye also appear with him in glory (KJV).

Our ultimate goal is to be with Jesus in glory. Our immediate goal is to reflect (however meagerly) God’s glory by being faithful Christians.

Be Sure To Be Thankful

Philippians 4:20 reads: “*Now unto God and our Father be glory for ever and ever. Amen.*” This is an expression of praise and thanksgiving to God. The term that describes such an expression is “*doxology.*” The word “*doxology*” is derived from the Greek word for glory or to glorify. Paul has been thinking about the mercies and blessings of God in his life, especially as exhibited in the relationship he enjoyed with the church at Philippi. He has been thinking about the time when he would finally go to be with God forever (Phil. 1:21; and see II Tim. 4:6-8). He has been thinking about his life and his service to God (Phil. 3:1-17). He has been thinking about having the mind of Christ (Phil. 2:5-11) and how that can keep one faithful through periods of stress. He has been thinking about how God has taken care of him, no matter what has happened (Phil. 4:4-13). He has been thinking about his good friends (Phil. 4:14-15). All of this has caused him to break forth with thanksgiving to God.

Wouldn't we do well to imitate the apostle? Think, as he did, of all the ways God has blessed you. Yes, He has blessed you materially. But think of the spiritual blessings you have from Him. You know which blessings will last. One day the only important thing in the world and in your life will be whether you spend eternity with God in glory. Are you ready for that day? God has supplied the help you need.

Chapter 6

“Christ Is Magnified” “Furtherance Of The Gospel”

• Philippians 1:12, 18, 20 •

Stan Stevenson

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The study of Philippians is one that rewards the student with rich treasures of knowledge. As with any book of the Bible, it can be studied again and again resulting in our gaining new insights into old truths. Our study will address Philippians 1:12,

But I would ye should understand, brethren,
that the things which happened unto me have
fallen out rather unto the furtherance of the
gospel....

We will also be considering Philippians 1:18, 20.

Paul's State

Three times, in this chapter, Paul speaks of his “bonds” (1:7, 13-14). Paul had been imprisoned in Caesarea for over two years (Acts 23:23-26:32). Having appealed to Caesar, he went to Rome and was imprisoned

there. It was while in Rome that he penned the letter to the Philippians. Though Paul’s body was imprisoned, his spirit was free. We are reminded of Paul and Silas in the Philippian jail, being held in stocks, yet singing and praying at midnight (Acts 16:24-25). How many would have missed the opportunity to teach the Philippian jailor because they were overcome with discouragement? Now, Paul is writing to the church in Philippi, again imprisoned because of his faith. But, his spirits are not bound. So, he can say that his *“bonds in Christ are manifest in all the palace, and in all other places...”* (Phil. 1:13). That which we may see as an obstacle may actually be an opportunity. What we see as an affliction may, in fact, be an advantage. We remember Paul asking God to remove his thorn in the flesh (II Cor. 12:8). What may not be remembered is the reason the thorn in the flesh was given. Paul said,

And lest I should be exalted above measure through the abundance of the revelations, there was given to me a thorn in the flesh, the messenger of Satan to buffet me, lest I should be exalted above measure (II Cor. 12:7).

And, we may miss the result of Paul’s thorn. He said,

Most gladly therefore will I rather glory in my infirmities, that the power of Christ may rest upon me. Therefore I take pleasure in infirmities, in reproaches, in necessities, in persecutions, in distresses for Christ’s sake: for when I am weak, then am I strong (II Cor. 12:9b-11).

When we have the attitude of Paul, our hardships should cause us to lean more upon God. It is during our trials, when we are leaning more heavily upon God, that we are the strongest. Paul did not wear his religion on a

sleeve, for others to see as some outward adornment. But he did practice and preach his religion no matter what his condition in life may have been. In this we have a great example to follow for our own lives. It may well be that we can show others the benefits of Christianity in a far better way when we are suffering, or struggling with life's problems than when everything is going well with us. God was able to take the troubles Paul faced and turn them for something good because of Paul's dedication.

Paul's Sympathies

What would one think about while in prison? How many hours would be spent longing for freedom? How many tears would one shed, grieving over the unjust treatment? Yet, we see Paul steadfastly enduring whatever hardships might come his way. We have already noted that Paul continued to preach and teach in spite of being imprisoned (Acts 16). Paul's attention was not on himself, but on God and on others.

We see his constant concern for those who are condemned because of sin. Truly, the heart of Paul was great in its sympathy for the souls of others. Here is a man who had vigorously persecuted the church. Having been converted, he channeled that same intense zeal toward reaching those who were in the same condition in which he had once been. For the Jews, he said,

That I have great heaviness and continual sorrow in my heart. For I could wish that myself were accursed from Christ for my brethren, my kinsmen according to the flesh...
(Rom. 9:2-3).

Later, in that same letter, he would say, "*Brethren, my heart's desire and prayer to God for Israel is, that they*

might be saved” (Rom. 10:1). But we remember that Paul’s work was primarily among the Gentiles (Acts 26:17). Here is a former Pharisee, one of the strictest Jews that could be found, chosen to preach to the Gentiles. Yet, Paul looked upon it as a blessing to be chosen for such a work. He said,

Nevertheless, brethren, I have written the more boldly unto you in some sort, as putting you in mind, because of the grace that is given to me of God, that I should be the minister of Jesus Christ to the Gentiles, ministering the gospel of God, that the offering up of the Gentiles might be acceptable, being sanctified by the Holy Ghost (Rom. 15:15-16).

Paul was always alert to the opportunity to teach someone the gospel. Though often faced with opposition and obstacles, he never lost sight of the privilege and responsibility he had to teach others that they might be saved.

But we also see Paul’s sympathetic concern for the church. He planned to send Timothy to Philippi that he might learn of their condition and be comforted (Phil. 2:19). Instead of thinking only of how his imprisonment was affecting him, Paul was also thinking of how it might affect his brethren. Everything Paul told the Philippian brethren was said in a way to offer encouragement. Paul’s imprisonment had resulted in “*furtherance of the gospel*” (1:12). The preaching of the gospel was continuing to be done, and many were hearing of Jesus (Phil. 1:13-18). Paul had a hope of being delivered, but even if death came, he was unafraid because of his faith and his life (Phil. 1:19-21). Paul did not want his bonds and his suffering, even unto death, to be a source of discouragement to his brethren. This man truly loved

the Lord's church. He wrote of some of his sufferings in II Corinthians 11. In addition to what he had suffered physically, he said, "*Beside those things that are without, that which cometh upon me daily, the care of all the churches*" (II Cor. 11:28). How much better off would every congregation be if all the members had the same attitude? In fact, wouldn't the church be better off if all the elders, deacons, and preachers had that attitude? How many decisions are made because of what is best for us personally instead of based upon what is best for the church? At no time do we see Paul, or any of the other apostles, ever doing anything to advance themselves. They always worked for the advancement of the gospel and of the church. Paul even refused to use some of his "*rights*" for the sake of the gospel. He told the church at Corinth,

If we have sown unto you spiritual things, is it a great thing if we shall reap your carnal things? If others be partakers of this power over you, are not we rather? Nevertheless we have not used this power: but suffer all things, lest we should hinder the gospel of Christ (I Cor. 9:11-12).

He told the Philippians that death would be "*far better.*" But he was confident that he would be spared and allowed to live because he was needed by his brethren (Phil. 1:23-25). He was willing to remain alive and delay the eternal home he longed for (II Cor. 5:2-4) to stay on earth and help his brethren. There is something to be said for convenience, yet we must not practice a religion of convenience. Ours must be a religion of conviction. Jesus said, "*If any man will come after me, let him deny himself, and take up his cross daily, and follow me*" (Luke 9:23). The bearing of a cross is something one endures

for the cause of Christ. Sickness is not a cross one bears. For even those who are not Christians have to deal with many forms of sickness. Financial hardship may not be a cross one bears, unless it comes because one is practicing his faith. Bearing the cross means that we endure suffering that comes to us because we are living the Christian life. It may be someone whose mate mistreats them because of their faith. It may be someone who loses a job because they refuse to compromise their convictions. It may be the loss of a friend because of one's dedication to Christ. It is not always convenient to be a faithful child of God. But our love for God and for the Lord and His church should cause us to be willing to bear whatever we must to live for Him and to live with Him in eternity. Like Paul, our attention will not only be on ourselves but also on what is good for the church.

We also see Paul's concern for Christ. Six times in Philippians 1:12-20 Paul speaks of Christ. If one wants to know what Paul meant by saying, “*For me to live is Christ...*” (Phil. 1:21a), he would merely have to follow the life of Paul. From the time of his conversion, Paul lived for Jesus Christ. It is obvious, from looking at the life of Paul, that Jesus took first place in his heart and in his life. His desire was that “*...as always, so now also Christ shall be magnified in my body, whether it be by life, or by death*” (Phil. 1:20). Imagine a man, so intent on living for Christ, that his primary concern was that Christ be made known to all, even if that required his own death. We have seen images enlarged through the use of magnification. Many have used binoculars, microscopes, and telescopes. Paul wanted to enlarge Christ through all that he did so that people might see Christ and be drawn to Him. We sometimes pray “*that*

Christ might be seen in us.” This is what Paul was trying to do in all that he did. He said,

I am crucified with Christ: nevertheless I live; yet not I, but Christ liveth in me: and the life that I now live in the flesh I live by the faith of the Son of God, who loved me, and gave himself for me (Gal. 2:20).

He could say,

...for whom I have suffered the loss of all things, and do count them but dung, that I may win Christ, and be found in Him, not having mine own righteousness, which is of the law, but that which is through the faith of Christ, the righteousness which is of God by faith: that I may know Him, and the power of His resurrection, and the fellowship of His sufferings, being made conformable unto His death (Phil. 3:8b-10).

To the Philippians he would admonish to “...*let your conversation be as it becometh the gospel of Christ...*” (Phil. 1:27a). Truly, Paul had set the example in this. His loyalty and dedication were beyond reproach. He said to the Galatians, “...*for I bear in my body the marks of the Lord Jesus*” (Gal. 6:17). Paul had the scars to prove his love for Jesus. How sad it is that brothers and sisters in Christ are hurt, even by the brethren at times. But how sad also that their love for Christ is so small that they will allow the wounds of others to cause them to abandon their Lord.

Paul's Satisfaction

In all of this we see a man with a tremendous attitude. When he spoke of the motives of some in preaching Christ, he noted that some did so sincerely,

but others were trying to “...*add affliction to my bonds*” (Phil. 1:16). Yet, Paul was filled with joy because Christ was being preached. This was not a situation where the message was being polluted with error. The message being preached was pure. Paul said, “...*Christ is preached...*” (Phil. 1:18). The problem was that the motives of some was perverted. They did not preach Christ because of loyalty to Christ nor for the love of lost souls. But they preached Christ in order to add to Paul’s suffering. Yet Paul was rejoicing because Christ was being preached. We can imagine Paul sitting in confinement, thinking of those who were free preaching and teaching the Gospel. He would admit that some did so “...*even of envy and strife; and some also of good will...*” (Phil. 1:15). But for Paul, the important thing was that people were hearing the truth about their Savior. If the truth was being preached, and it was, the motives of the preachers and teachers did not diminish the message. So, people were hearing that which would enable them to be saved.

It is important to note that Paul’s joy was aided by his peace of mind. Paul had learned how to be content (Phil. 4:11). It is only when Christians are content that they open up the possibilities for the fullness of joy in Christ. People who are dissatisfied are never happy for very long, if at all. The Psalmist said, “*I am feeble and sore broken: I have roared by reason of the disquietness of my heart*” (Psm. 38:8). When we read the seventy-third psalm, we see one who was dissatisfied because of the perceived advantages of the wicked. He said, “*Verily I have cleansed my heart in vain, and washed my hands in innocency*” (Psm. 73:13). There was no joy for this one, because he was dissatisfied with his life. It was not until he went into the sanctuary (Psm. 73:17) that he

came to have peace of mind, for he saw things from heaven's perspective. He had forgotten the eternal reckoning that would take place. But, when he realized that all must face God in the judgment, the righteous have God on their side (v. 23), and the wicked will be destroyed (v. 27), he had a new appreciation for the blessings of a child of God. Paul could rejoice because he was content. He put his faith in God (II Tim. 1:12), and no matter what his lot in life, he could be happy. No wonder he would say to the Philippians,

Be careful for nothing; but in every thing by prayer and supplication with thanksgiving let your requests be made known unto God. And the peace of God, which passeth all understanding, shall keep your hearts and minds through Christ Jesus (Phil. 4:6-7).

Notice, that in Philippians 4:4, he told them to "*Rejoice in the Lord always: and again I say, Rejoice.*" But, if one does not learn to pray and trust God, and enjoy the peace that passes understanding, how can he ever hope to rejoice? The answer is he cannot. So contentment and joy go hand in hand. This is why Jesus could say,

Blessed are they which are persecuted for righteousness' sake: for theirs is the kingdom of heaven. Blessed are ye, when men shall revile you, and persecute you, and shall say all manner of evil against you falsely, for my sake. Rejoice, and be exceeding glad: for great is your reward in heaven: for so persecuted they the prophets which were before you (Matt. 5:10-12).

When we put our life in the hands of God and trust that He will always do what is right, guide us in the right way, and never leave us, we can be happy even when

we suffer for the sake of Christ. If men and women could learn to be content, they would find a joy in serving God. So many have little or no time to be involved in the work of the church because they are busy pursuing this world and its goods. There is nothing wrong with ambition. But, why can we not have more ambition toward spiritual things and less for the things of the world? The happiest people in the service of God are those who have found peace and contentment in life and are able to enjoy being involved in the service of the Lord and the work of the church.

May God grant unto us the wisdom and opportunity to develop these wonderful attributes of Paul in our own lives. May none be called upon to suffer as did Paul, but may we learn to direct our affections toward the lost, the church, and God. May we learn to be content that we might realize the fullness of the joy of serving God.

Chapter 7

“Those Things...Learned ...Received...Heard... Seen In Me, DO”

• Philippians 4:9 •

Everett Chambers

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I'd rather see a sermon than hear one any day,

I'd rather one walk with me than merely tell the way;

'Cause the eye's a better pupil and more willing than the ear,

Fine counsel could be confusing, but example is always clear.

And the best of all teachers are the one who live their creeds,

For to see faith put in action is what everybody needs;

So though an able man amaze me by his eloquence, I say,

I'd rather see a sermon than hear one any day.

(Edgar A. Guest - I'd Rather See a Sermon)

As a society, we have almost completely neglected the value of setting a good personal example worthy of imitation. Some parents and many of our leaders live by a “do as I say and not as I do,” creed. But the Bible has a lot to say on the subject of personal example and imitation. Twice in his letter to the Hebrew Christians, the writer calls upon them to imitate the lives of faithful Christians (Heb. 6:12; 13:7). In fact, he told them to

remember their leaders and to observe their way of life and to imitate their faith. As always, the Bible is balanced, so in III John 11 we are told,

Beloved, do not imitate what is evil, but what is good. The one who does good is of God; the one who does evil has not seen God.

According to Ephesians 5:1, we should be imitators of God. This is a rather formidable command. Since Deity is so far removed from humanity, how can we, with all our human frailties, imitate God? The answer is, in part, to imitate Christ, the God Man. John 1:18 tells us:

No man has seen God at anytime, the only begotten God, who is in the bosom of the Father, He has explained Him.

Therefore, by looking at Jesus, we get a picture of God in human form. This makes it easier for us to follow His example. Through Jesus, we get a clear picture of how to interact with our fellow human beings appropriately. We can also learn how to handle life on earth with all its many difficulties.

When Jesus was charged with being a pretender and a usurper of divine authority by the Pharisees, this was the main argument of His defense:

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

He also said in John 8:28:

When you lift up the Son of Man, then you will know that I am He, and I do nothing on my own initiative, but I speak these things as the Father taught me.

Again, in John 12:49, He says:

For I did not speak on my own initiative, but the Father Himself who sent me has given Me commandment, what to say and what to speak.

Notice that Jesus was not interested in obtaining glory for Himself. He wanted the Jewish people and their leaders to know that He was merely an imitator of God. He did not think it below His position to imitate God. Quite to the contrary, He saw the imitation of God as a cornerstone of His ministry. He was very careful to do and say exactly as He was commanded.

But imitation did not stop with Jesus imitating God, His Father, for He turned to the disciples and commanded them to imitate Him. After He had humbled Himself and served the twelve disciples by washing their feet, this is what He said to them:

If I then, the Lord and the Teacher, washed your feet, you ought also to wash one another's feet. For I gave you an example that you also should do as I did to you (John 13:14-15).

Paul told the brethren in Thessalonica that they were imitators of both himself and the Lord (I Thess. 1:6). Entire churches were also imitators of other churches (I Thess. 2:14) and Paul made consistent efforts to get the churches of Christ to imitate each other (II Cor. 8 & 9). Therefore, it is clear that imitation is an important subject to which we must give attention.

The task before us in this lecture is to look at the example of Paul, as it is seen in Philippians, with a view to imitating it. He sets us an example worthy of imitation in several areas. Let us consider the example of Paul in the following:

He is an imitator of Christ.

He is a man of prayer (1:3-4).

He is a genuinely affectionate and expressive Christian (1:7-8).

He is a grateful and gracious servant of the Lord (1:7b).

He is obsessed with proclaiming the gospel and willing to make personal sacrifice for its growth and defense (1:18).

Paul, An Imitator Of Christ

Not surprisingly, Paul himself is a stellar example of the very thing that he called upon the Philippians to do, for he himself was an imitator of Christ. Like his Lord, he was willing to suffer to advance God’s agenda. In the third chapter of this letter, he reveals that he counted the things that he once held dear as mere refuse. He gave up all the status symbols and the trappings of empty religion with which he had surrounded himself. He did this to have a close and meaningful walk with God through Christ and to secure a home in heaven. The new path that his life followed seemed to mimic the path that Christ Himself took. According to the second chapter of Philippians, Christ gave up all the glory of heaven to become a lowly human being. He volunteered for a life of suffering and poverty in order to bring about our redemption and to enrich us spiritually. Paul understood that it was his privilege to imitate Christ and to fill that which was still lacking in the sufferings of Christ (1:29). Therefore, with a conviction born of experience, he called upon Christians to imitate him as a way to grow up in the Lord.

In his letter to the Christians at Corinth, Paul told them to imitate him as he imitated Christ (I Cor. 11:1). When he had made a similar call in the fourth chapter, he told them that he was sending Timothy in his place (I Cor. 4:16-17). Timothy had so imitated Paul that the

Corinthians were assured of imitating Paul's example if they themselves imitated Timothy.

Therefore, there is such a thing as a biblical doctrine of imitation. When the Sanhedrin observed the actions of the Apostles, they took note that they had been with Jesus (Acts 4:13). The Apostles had so imitated their Lord that they served as a reminder of Jesus to His enemies. It is not an overstatement to suggest that there is a well established pattern of imitation in the Scriptures.

Paul, A Man Of Prayer

Paul had an explicit trust in God. No doubt he fostered and cultivated this through his prayer life. "*God will answer your prayer and deliver me*" (1:19). Paul's prayer life also helped him to remain focused (1:12f). Although he was imprisoned, he saw the hand of God and was confident that God was working in his circumstances. He knew and accepted the fact that he was always a teacher whether by word or by example (1:29-30; 3:2).

Undoubtedly, Paul's sojourn in a Roman jail helped him to learn the secret of being content in any and every situation. But it was his prayer life that kept him strong and focused. He released his frustrations in prayer to God. He took whatever was troubling him to God, his Father. Therefore, when Paul encouraged the Philippians to use prayer to undergird their relationship with God, he was telling them to do the very thing that he was doing. In other words, he was sharing the secret of his success with them.

As a prisoner who was very restricted in his activities, Paul's letter was not filled with complaints. Instead he stressed the need for the Philippians to rejoice at all times, maintaining a spirit of gentleness. He told them to live a life that was free from anxiety. The key to living in this way, he said, was a strong prayer life.

Anything that caused anxiety was to be presented to God through prayer and petition. A fervent and faithful prayer life is the channel through which the peace of God flows into the lives of God’s children.

The mind of a Christian is not too riddled with anxiety or other unwholesome thoughts, but with things that are noble, pure, and lovely. Paul rounds out his charge to the Philippian Christians by calling them to imitate whatever they had seen in him.

Christ was the source of Paul’s strength. Strengthened by the Lord Jesus Christ, Paul knew that he could do anything that was possible for a man to do. He could successfully get through any hardship that came his way. His confidence was not misplaced. He did not put his trust in his heritage, his religious heritage or his education. His supreme confidence was built on Christ, grounded in obedience and buttressed with prayer.

Paul, An Expressive And Affectionate Christian

“I feel this way about you. I have you in my heart. I long for you with all the affection of Christ. My beloved brethren, whom I long to see, my joy, my crown.” How many preachers and elders use this kind of language in speaking with those among whom they labor? To some this seems like rather mushy language that portrays weakness. Men especially would have a problem with this since we are taught to leave the mushy stuff to women. Nevertheless, this is an apostle of Christ speaking. He is strong in his expressions when necessary, but never afraid to speak tenderly and encouragingly.

Jesus was like this. In His rebuke to the Jewish ruling class He laments:

O Jerusalem, Jerusalem who kills the prophets and stones those who are sent to her! How often I have wanted to gather your children together, the way a hen gathers her chicks under her wings, and you were unwilling (Matt. 23:37).

Mark tells us that Jesus looked at the rich young ruler and felt a love for him (Mark 10:21). John informs us that He wept over the death of Lazarus, His good friend, and was especially moved when He saw Lazarus' sisters weeping (John 11:33-35). For his part, Matthew tells us that when Jesus saw the harassed and helpless multitudes, He was filled with compassion and immediately sought to improve their condition (Matt 9:35-38).

Therefore, His apostle, Paul, was merely imitating his Lord when he cultivated and expressed genuine emotion for those whom he was trying to bring to Christian maturity. This was no accident. The genuinely affectionate and expressive character of Paul can be seen in his letters to the Thessalonians as well as the Corinthians.

Like Paul, we too must be unafraid to express genuine love and affection towards our brethren. To do this is to imitate our Lord and His apostles. Let us not be stymied in this area by culture or our own warped sense of masculinity.

Paul, A Grateful And Gracious Christian

In spite of his very difficult and trying situation, Paul remained "*others*" centered. This is perhaps one of the greatest challenges that we as Christians face. When we are in pain or otherwise inconvenienced, the compass seems to naturally point south. Self becomes the focus and unless there is an improvement in our condition, our

focus remains on self. **Our** needs are greater and more pressing than those of anyone else. Even the gospel and God’s Kingdom take a back seat, at least temporarily. But Paul did not focus too much on himself. He took the time to praise Epaphroditus, to commend Timothy and to thank the Christians for supporting him while he labored in Thessalonica. He let them know the vital role they played in advancing the gospel. In many ways he told them he could not have done it without them. He is also intent on using his influence to foster harmony in the church. As a result, he uses the opportunity to urge the leaders to speak with Euodia and Syntyche about their troubled relationship. He wants them to be reminded about how important they both were to the work of the Lord in Philippi. Notice the tact with which he handles a potentially explosive situation. His example, as revealed in this letter, is that of a gracious man who lavished praise and encouragement on others. It is clear that he is intent on building them up. His desire is to confirm and defend the gospel as well as strengthen the church, even from behind prison bars. Rather than being discouraged by his letter, they would no doubt be edified and instructed.

Paul, A Proclaimer And Defender Of The Gospel

“Whatever the cost, the gospel must be proclaimed.” Although it is not explicitly stated, this was the motto of Paul. He maintained this focus during his entire Christian life. That this was so is seen in expressions such as *“our citizenship is in heaven”* and *“I forget what is behind and reach forward to what lies ahead.”* Clearly there was no sacrifice too great for him to make, nor any personal price too high for him to pay in the attaining

of his goals. On another occasion, he would declare that he did not count his life as dear to himself. The most important thing to Paul was to finish the task assigned him by the Lord (Acts 20:24).

Upon closer examination, all this reveals is that Paul was a man who had his priorities right. If it is the case that this life is our one and only probationary period, (and it is) we should do everything to secure and enhance our standing in the life to come. Certainly we should not do anything to threaten or undermine our standing.

Paul stayed focused on the prize. I am tempted to add “*even while in prison.*” But the fact is that he had no choice. To lose his focus in times of adversity would be a sure way to undermine all that he had worked for. His sacrifice up to this time would be of little value if he took his focus off of the prize. So with determination, he gritted his teeth and stayed on the course (3:12-16; I Cor. 9:26-27). To say that he was undeterred by hardships, whether personal suffering, imprisonment or impending death, is to understate the depth of his focus and convictions.

His happiness was certainly not dependent on the circumstances that were operating in his personal life. Rudyard Kipling, the early 20th century English poet, tells us that we need to treat success and failure as impostors. Kipling intends for us to keep an even keel, but he is a “*Johnny-come-lately*” as far as this insight is concerned. Paul not only said this, but he practiced what he preached. It is not possible to read Philippians without noticing Paul’s absolute serenity. He uses the term “*rejoice*” nine times.

Ordinarily, we would think, “*Now what is there to rejoice about while in prison? How can you stay calm at a time like this?*” But Paul simply did not have the

time to wallow in self-pity. He knew that the hour of his departure was drawing near and although he desired to depart and be with the Lord, he wanted to continue his service. So if he was discouraged he took it to the Lord in prayer. Publicly, he appeared to be focused on his task of proclaiming the gospel and making sure that the church at Philippi grew and matured.

Conclusion

In this letter to the Christians at Philippi, Paul lays out many challenges suitable for Christians of all ages. Not surprisingly, this letter also serves as a personal testimony. He was a committed imitator of his Lord and he was simply calling upon the brethren to follow his example. He was no “*do as I say, but not as I do*” preacher. Instead, he was ever striving to bridge the gap between his life and doctrine (I Tim. 4:16), between the theory and practice of Christianity, between lofty ideals confined to the pages of the Bible and striving to make God’s teaching a part of everyday living. He walked the talk. He was not a hypocritical preacher. Instead, he was the very epitome of what he calls upon us to be and to do. If a picture is worth a thousand words, then Paul wrote many more words than are recorded in the New Testament letters that he penned.

Everyone likes to hear nice things said about them. The truth is that most of us like a little bit of flattery. Since the sincerest form of flattery is imitation, let us live lives worthy of imitation. In this way, we can receive all the flattery that we desire, free from guilt. We should strive to set examples worthy of imitation and we should all imitate the good that we see in other Christians.

Chapter 8

“Set For The Defense” “Stand Fast”

• Philippians 1:7, 17; 4:1 •

James Meadows

James Meadows is an excellent speaker, writer, and widely known throughout the brotherhood for his excellent classroom and private study books (almost forty) ~ He has written many articles for several different religious papers ~ James is presently working with the East Tennessee School of Preaching in Knoxville, TN.



Paul’s relationship with the Philippians was close-knit from the beginning. He went to Philippi on his second missionary journey where he converted Lydia and her household (Acts 16:13-15), cast the spirit of divination out of the maiden (Acts 16:16-24), and converted the Philippian jailor (Acts 16:25-34). From that first day Paul and the Philippians had enjoyed “...*fellowship in the gospel...*” (Phil. 1:5). Part of that fellowship was being partakers with him “...*in the defence...of the gospel...*” (Phil. 1:7).

The methodology planned in this study is as follows:

- (1) What does “*set for the defense*” mean?
- (2) Is there really such a thing as gospel (truth, sound doctrine) that needs defending?
- (3) Why is there a need for defending the Gospel?
- (4) What are some ways in which false doctrines and false teachers are being encouraged by Christians?

- (5) What are some truths that must be recognized in defending the truth and dealing with false teachers?
- (6) Stand fast in the Lord, and
- (7) Conclusion.

What Does “Set For The Defense” Mean?

Even as it is meet for me to think this of you all, because I have you in my heart; inasmuch as both in my bonds, and in the defence and confirmation of the gospel, ye all are partakers of my grace...But the other of love, knowing that I am set for the defence of the gospel (Phil. 1:7, 17).¹

The word “defense” is a Greek judicial term referring to an attorney talking his client off from a charge, thus presenting a verbal defense. Paul was defending the Faith before the tribunal of the world, Nero’s throne. A successful defense would result in the gospel being confirmed, that is, made stable in the sense that its claims would be shown to be true.²

Paul speaks of the “*defense*” and “*confirmation*” of the gospel in which the Philippians were having fellowship with him.

The two words are linked, in the Greek, into one idea. “Defense”: - Greek, **apologia**....Unlike our words “apology,” in its every day use, it means a statement of a good case against an accuser. Acts 28:17-23 shews us St. Paul’s “apologizing” in his Roman prison....³

The “*confirmation of the gospel*” does not refer to some religious ceremony, but rather to the undergirding of

faith by teaching and exhortation.

And when they had preached the gospel to that city, and had taught many, they returned again to Lystra, and to Iconium, and Antioch, Confirming the souls of the disciples, and exhorting them to continue in the faith... (Acts 14:21-22).

The confirmation (bebaiosis) of the gospel is the building up of the strength of the gospel from within, the edifying and the establishing of fellow-Christians within the church. The Christian must further the gospel by defending it against the attacks of its enemies, and by building up and strengthening the faith and devotion of its friends.⁴

For the confirmation of it by my suffering - They who preached Christ with a pure intention, knew certainly that the apostle was sent to Rome to defend the gospel by suffering for it. For by voluntarily persisting to preach the gospel, although he was, and knew he still should be, exposed to various and great sufferings for preaching it, he gave full proof of his knowledge of its truth and great importance to the salvation of mankind.⁵

The apostle Peter also urges Christians to make a defense (**apologia**) of the truths that they believe and hold.

But sanctify the Lord God in your hearts: and be ready always to give an answer to every man that asketh you a reason of the hope that is in you with meekness and fear (I Peter 3:15).

Brother Guy N. Woods' comments on this verse set forth clearly the meaning of "*answer*" and the Christian's

responsibility.

This readiness to “give answer” (literally, to make defense, **apologia**), is to be constant: “being ready always...” ...It is significant that the words “answer” and “reason” in the text are closely related in meaning: To every one who asks an **account** we are to give an **account**. The answer is given in reference to the hope entertained, i.e., with respect to the grounds on which the hope is based.

This obligation implies sufficient acquaintance with the word of God to substantiate one’s hope therewith, and godliness of life consistent with its teaching....The defense is to be made with “meekness and fear.” When called upon to justify their position, Christians are to do so with reason and logic; but not with bold defiance nor arrogance and pride; the “answer” is to be made with “meekness,” i.e., an attitude free of scorn, haughtiness and bitterness; and “in fear,” fear of God and the judgment.⁶

Jude likewise recognized that Christians must “*contend for the faith*” for false teachers are around.

Beloved, when I gave all diligence to write unto you of the common salvation, it was needful for me to write unto you, and exhort you that ye should earnestly contend for the faith which was once delivered unto the saints (Jude 3).

This is the battle cry of the church. The great truths set forth in this text are demanding and challenging to our nature. It eliminates the idea of us contending for anything that is not “*the faith*.” It demands that we allow nothing to cause us to give less than all diligence

in contending for the faith. It summons every member of the church for loyalty to the conflict between truth and error.

The need of upholding the truth cannot be over-emphasized since our land is filled with so many different teachings, each claiming to be upheld and supported by the word of God. This poses a number of problems for a sincere seeker after God. He sees good, sincere people in all religions. He sees each one "*proving*" his doctrine by the Bible. He sees each of the doctrines contradicting one another. He wonders which one to accept because (1) If they are all right which one is best for him? and (2) If they are all wrong how does one determine what is truth? Such a state of affairs is sad indeed when one realizes the Lord prayed for unity (John 17:20-21), the early church was of "*...one heart and of one soul...*" (Acts 4:32) and Paul begged the Corinthians to be of the same mind (I Cor. 1:10).

Is There Really Such A Thing As Gospel (Truth, Sound Doctrine) That Needs Defending?

"But speak thou the things which become sound doctrine" (Titus 2:1). There is such a thing as sound doctrine. The word "*sound*" is defined "*to be in health,*" "*healthy,*" and "*be sound.*" The Greek word **Hugianin** is translated "*in health*" (Luke 5:31), "*...whole...*" (Luke 7:10), "*...safe and sound*" (Luke 15:27).

The gospels clearly reveal that Jesus had a doctrine. When Jesus finished the sermon on the mount the people were "*...astonished at his doctrine*" (Matt. 7:28; cf. Matt. 22:33; Mark 11:18). He said "*...unto them in his doctrine*" (Mark 4:2; 12:38). "*...My doctrine is not mine...*" (John 7:16). "*The high priest then asked Jesus...of his doctrine*"

(John 18:19).

The early church continued steadfastly “...in the apostles' doctrine...” (Acts 2:42); the priests accused the apostles of filling Jerusalem “...with your doctrine...” (Acts 5:28); Serguis Paulus “...being astonished at the doctrine of the Lord” (Acts 13:12); Paul told Timothy to charge “...some that they teach no other doctrine” (I Tim. 1:3). and then named several things “...contrary to sound doctrine” (I Tim. 1:8-10). Timothy was admonished to give attendance “...Take heed unto thyself, and unto the doctrine...” (I Tim. 4:13, 16); some will not endure “...sound doctrine...” (II Tim. 4:3).

The apostles claimed that they received a message from God and revealed it to the world. Jesus promised to send the Holy Spirit to guide them into all truth (John 16:13); they were to remain in Jerusalem till the power came (Luke 24:49); the power was to come when the Holy Spirit came (Acts 1:8); the Holy Spirit came on Pentecost (Acts 2:1-4). Paul claimed that he was guided by the Holy Spirit and claimed a direct revelation from God.

Howbeit we speak wisdom among them that are perfect: yet not the wisdom of this world, nor of the princes of this world, that come to nought: But we speak the wisdom of God in a mystery, even the hidden wisdom, which God ordained before the world unto our glory: Which none of the princes of this world knew: for had they known it, they would not have crucified the Lord of glory. But as it is written, Eye hath not seen, nor ear heard, neither have entered into the heart of man, the things which God hath prepared for them that love him. But God hath revealed them unto us by his Spirit: for the Spirit searcheth all things, yea,

the deep things of God. For what man knoweth the things of a man, save the spirit of man which is in him? even so the things of God knoweth no man, but the Spirit of God. Now we have received, not the spirit of the world, but the spirit which is of God; that we might know the things that are freely given to us of God. Which things also we speak, not in the words which man's wisdom teacheth, but which the Holy Ghost teacheth; comparing spiritual things with spiritual (I Cor. 2:6-13).

But I certify you, brethren, that the gospel which was preached of me is not after man. For I neither received it of man, neither was I taught it, but by the revelation of Jesus Christ (Gal. 1:11-12).

Peter claimed inspiration for the Bible writers (II Peter 1:20-21).

There is such a thing as sound doctrine and we can know it. There are those today who contend,

there is such a thing as an absolute truth, but we can never know it, thus we must ever view it as a goal which demands unflagging effort to attain it.

Brother Thomas Warren asked the question:

If we cannot learn the truth, then the Bible is not even a meaningful revelation from God to man. What difference would it make (if the Bible is not God's truth) if none of us can possibly learn the truth?⁷

The late James Bales raised the question:

How long can New Testament Christianity survive in an atmosphere where its teachers question everything, are tentative in all things,

are non-militant in all their positions, who must view all as in the same tentative quest, and to whom it is said that a healthy respect for the tentative finds of others would become mandatory? ⁸

But for one who believes the Bible the following facts clearly show that one can know the truth (if not, then these things are impossible): (1) one can know the doctrine (John 7:17); (2) one is made free (from sin, fear, ignorance) by knowing the truth (John 8:32); (3) one is sanctified by truth (John 17:17-19); (4) one is saved by truth (Rom. 1:16); (5) God desires man to speak the truth in love (Eph. 4:15); (6) God wants the Christian to have his loins girt about with truth (Eph. 6:14); (7) one is chosen through belief of the truth (II Thess. 2:13); (8) God desires man to come to a knowledge of the truth (I Tim. 2:4); (9) God desires man to rightly divide the truth (II Tim. 2:15); (10) God wants man to acknowledge the truth (II Tim. 2:25); (11) Man is begotten by the truth (James 1:18); (12) God does not want man to be against the truth (James 3:14); (13) one is purified by obeying the truth (I Peter 1:22; cf. Rom. 6:17-18); (14) God wants his children to walk in truth (II John 4).

Why Is There A Need For Defending The Gospel?

False teachers and false doctrines abound on every hand. The very fact that Paul was set for the “*defense of the gospel*” reveals a need even in the first century (it is no different today). Consider the following: (1) Jesus warned us “...to beware of false prophets” (Matt. 7:15); (2) some teach for doctrines the “...*commandments of men*” (Matt. 15:9); (3) Jesus warned his disciples against the “*leaven*” (doctrine) of the Pharisees and Sadducees

(Matt. 16:10-11); (4) Elymas, sought to “...pervert the right ways of the Lord” (Acts 13:10); (5) Paul warned the elders from Ephesus about false teachers both within the church and outside the church (Acts 20:28-32); (6) There were false apostles and deceitful workers at Corinth (II Cor. 11:13-15); (7) There are always those who would pervert the gospel of Christ (Gal. 1:6-8); (8) Some do not walk by the same rule (the gospel) and are enemies of the cross of Christ (Phil. 3:15-19); (9) There are those who teach the doctrine of devils (demons) (I Tim. 4:1); (10) man can believe a lie (which means some were lying) (II Thess. 2:8-12); (11) after the first and second admonition factious men (heretics, false teachers) are to be refused (Titus 3:10-11); (12) There shall be false teachers among you (II Peter 2:1); false teachers are to be tested by the word of God (I John 4:1).

False teachers constitute a constant menace to the church and many warnings, as we’ve noted, appear in the New Testament. Peter said false teachers,

...privily bring us their false doctrine. Privily (**Pareisago**) means to slip in by the side of, and indicates these false teachers had artfully and slyly introduced their false doctrines by the side of truth in such a fashion as to deceive those who had accepted them.⁹

What Are Some Ways In Which False Doctrines And False Teachers Can Be Encouraged By Christians?

Let us consider some general ways in which Christians encourage false teachers. First, when false teachers teach that truth is neither absolute nor attainable, and they are not opposed, it is a serious matter. Second, when false, liberalistic teachers brought

into local training series and congregations and Christians, who talk about liberalism, do not oppose them. Third, when colleges use known false teachers and thus galvanize them and their false doctrines into “*respectability*.” Fourth, when New Testament discipline is not being practiced against such it displeases God.

Garland Elkins lists some specific ways in which Christians encourage false teachers.

1. Elders who fail to insist that the gospel be fully preached from the pulpit. This allows and encourages the idea that the gospel is not really relevant.
2. Elders who are not willing to stand behind solid preaching and teaching.
3. Brethren who ignore doctrinal study and preaching.
4. Those who believe all things, doctrinal and moral, are relative.
5. Those who believe the Bible is inspired as other books are inspired and not an infallible guide in religion.
6. Those who believe the Church is just another denomination.
7. Those who believe doctrinal unsoundness will go away unopposed.
8. Those who believe fellowship in Christ is not contingent on doctrinal purity and agreement.

What Are Some Truths That Must Be Recognized In Defending The Truth And Opposing False Teachers?

First, we must recognize the different reasons why men speak things contrary to the gospel (sound doctrine).

Some are more concerned about their own traditions and ways than the truth of God (Mark 7:8-9). Some are teaching for selfish reasons and are unconcerned about the souls of men (Rom. 16:17-18; II Peter 2:3). Some handle the word of God deceitfully with the intended purpose of deceiving people (II Cor. 2:17; 4:2). There are some people who don't love the truth (II Thess. 2:10). Some are ever learning but never able to come to a knowledge of the truth (II Tim. 3:7). Some people resist the truth (II Tim. 3:8). Some are honestly, sincerely mistaken, but don't know it.

Second, Jude clearly reveals the characteristics of these early opponents of the faith and the same characteristics are displayed today.

1. They creep in alongside, craftily infiltrating the saints while pretending to be something they are not (v. 4).
2. They are men of impure, unholy motives (v. 4).
3. They are most indignant in the presence of proper authority (vs. 8-10).
4. They are destructive and willing to compromise (v. 11).
5. They are hidden dangers, making progress by false promises (vs. 12-13).
6. They use others for their advantage (v. 16).¹⁰

Third, we must recognize the danger and disaster of false doctrine both within and without the church. Every accountable being on the face of the earth is lost (Rom. 3:23). God's way of making men righteous is revealed in the gospel (Rom. 1:16-17), but it must not be changed (Gal. 1:6-10).

Fourth, we must not try to force the truth upon those that don't want it.

Give not that which is holy unto the dogs,
neither cast ye your pearls before swine, lest

they trample them under their feet, and turn again and rend you (Matt. 7:6).

Fifth, we must always speak the truth in love.

But speaking the truth in love, may grow up unto him in all things, which is the head, even Christ (Eph. 4:15).

Sixth, we must be gentle, meek, and patient in teaching those that oppose themselves.

And the servant of the Lord must not strive; but be gentle unto all men, apt to teach, patient, in meekness instructing those that oppose themselves; if God peradventure will give them repentance to the acknowledging of the truth; and that they may recover themselves out of the snare of the devil, who are taken captive by him at his will (II Tim. 2:24-26).

Seventh, we must not in any way encourage false teachers.

Whosoever transgresseth and abideth not in the doctrine of Christ, hath not God. He that abideth in the doctrine of Christ, he hath both the Father and the Son. If there come any unto you, and bring not this doctrine, receive him not unto your house, neither bid him God speed: For he that biddeth him God speed is partaker of his evil deeds (II John 9-11)

Eighth, we must, when they refuse to change their course that is contrary to sound doctrine, mark them and refuse fellowship with them.

Now I beseech you, brethren, mark them which cause division and offenses contrary to the doctrine which ye have learned; and avoid them (Rom. 16:17).

A man that is a heretic after the first and second admonition reject; Knowing that he that is such is subverted, and sinneth, being condemned of himself (Titus 3:10-11).

Now we commend you, brethren, in the name of our Lord Jesus Christ, that ye withdraw yourselves from every brother that walketh disorderly, and not after the tradition which he received of us (II Thess. 3:6).

“Stand Fast”

Therefore, my brethren dearly beloved and longed for, my joy and crown, so stand fast in the Lord, my dearly beloved (Phil. 4:1).

The word “*therefore*” suggests the close connection between the present verse and what has just been stated. Just as Paul, by the use of the word “*therefore*,” urges the hope of a glorious resurrection as an incentive to steadfastness in the Christian life (I Cor. 15:58); just as he uses “*the depth of the riches of the wisdom of God*” and “*his mercies*” as an incentive to “*present our bodies a living sacrifice*” (Rom. 11:33-12:2), so he makes our citizenship in heaven and the vision of future glory “*and inspired force*” to “*stand fast in the Lord*” (Phil. 3:20-21; 4:1). The word which Paul used for **stand fast (stekete)** is the word which would be used for a soldier standing fast in the shock of the battle, with the enemy surging down upon him.¹¹

Johnstone wrote that,

as Christians, your position is one of such dignity, and your hopes are so lofty,—stand fast in the Lord with the energy and the persistency beseeeming persons who regard themselves as citizens of heaven....¹²

One effect of the gospel is a new character and one aspect of the new character is **stability**. The expression “*stand fast*” is used six times in Paul’s epistles: “*stand fast in the faith*” (I Cor. 16:13); “*stand fast, therefore*” (Gal. 5:1); “*stand fast in one spirit*” (Phil. 1:27); “*stand fast in the Lord*” (I Thess. 3:8); “*stand fast, and hold the traditions*” (II Thess. 2:15); and “*stand fast in the Lord*” (Phil. 4:1). “*Stand*” means to “*stand firm.*” “*Fast*” means “*firmly fixed; stable.*”

“*In the Lord,*” is the source of man’s stability. “*In the Lord*” or “*in Christ*” (or its equivalent) is used about 200 times in Paul’s epistles, several times in this epistle: “*I trust in the Lord that I also myself shall come shortly*” (2:24); “*rejoice in the Lord*” (4:4); “*stand fast in the Lord*” (4:1); “*be of the same mind in the Lord*” (4:2). To be “*in the Lord*” is to be in his church and the same process that puts one “*in the Lord*” puts one in his church.

Conclusion

The challenge is clearly before us. Will we accept the challenge?

It is my firm conviction that we are sinning away our “days of grace” by the divided condition of our people and the watering-down of the gospel of Jesus Christ. We have let this permissive age that has captivated the world, especially our precious and lovely young people, make cowards of too many of us. There is entirely too much compromising with this permissive element, both in the world and in the church.¹³

“Watch ye, stand fast in the faith, quit ye like men, be strong” (I Cor. 16:13). Error is crouched in countless forms concealed. Christ

calls for vigilance—"watch ye." But when error has been flushed out of the hiding, and forms into advancing columns against the church, Christ calls for courage—"stand fast in the faith." Then when the lines are drawn tight, surging issues of truth and error are locked in the grim struggle for mastery—Christ calls for valour—"quit ye like men." Perform like a Christian soldier, worthy of the name. Finally, when the crisis has come in the conflict of the faith, heroism, the heroism of faith—"be strong," "hold the line."¹⁴

Endnotes

1 All quotations are from the King James Version unless otherwise noted.

2 Kenneth S. Wuest, **Word Studies—Philippians** (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans Pub. Co., 1970), p. 53.

3 H. G. Moule, **The Epistle Of Paul The Apostle To The Philippians** (Cambridge: University Press, 1903), p. 42.

4 William Barclay, **The Letters To The Philippians, Colossians, And Thessalonians** (Philadelphia: The Westminster Press, 1959), p. 21.

5 Joseph Benson, **Romans To The Revelation** (New York: Carlton & Phillips, 1854), Vol. II, p. 340.

6 Guy N. Woods, **Commentary On The New Testament Epistles Of Peter, John, And Jude** (Nashville: Gospel Advocate Co., 1954), pp. 97-98.

7 Thomas B. Warren, **Sermon Outlines On The Work Of The Gospel Preacher** (Henderson: Arnold Office Supply, 1969), p. 5.

8 James Bales, "The Difference Is Not So Small," **The Spiritual Sword**, Vol. 2, No. 1, Oct. 1970, p. 12.

9 Woods, op. cit., p. 163.

10 William Woodson, Freed-Hardeman Lectures, "What Is Liberalism?" (Nashville: Gospel Advocate Co., 1970), p. 11.

11 Barclay, op. cit., p. 87.

12 Robert Jonestone, **The Epistle of Paul to the**

Philippians (Grand Rapids: Baker Book House, 1955), p. 335.

13 E. R. Harper, “Brother Harper Writes,” **Gospel Advocate** (Nashville: Gospel Advocate Co., Aug. 31, 1972), p. 549.

14 Foy E. Wallace, Jr., “The Faith Once Delivered,” **God’s Prophetic Word** (Lufkin: The Roy E. Cogdill Publishing Co., 1946), p. 42.

Chapter 9

Flesh Versus Spirit; “Being Filled With The Fruits Of Righteousness”

• Philippians 1:11; 3:3 •

Stan Stevenson

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Philippians is one of the epistles attributed to Paul’s imprisonment. The place of writing has been disrupted and discussed among many people. Some have thought Paul may have written Philippians while imprisoned in Caesarea for approximately two years (Acts 23:23-26:32). Others have thought Paul wrote it while imprisoned in Ephesus. However, there is no definite textual evidence of Paul having ever been imprisoned in Ephesus. The best evidence is for the traditional view which says that Paul wrote to the church at Philippi during his first Roman imprisonment. It was during this time that he also wrote Philemon, Colossians, and Ephesians, possibly in that order with Philippians being the last of the epistles he penned. Though they may be studied separately, they can also be studied as a unit, with each book giving emphasis to an important

element of the gospel. Philemon emphasizes the Christian, showing that each Christian is important and should be valued as such by every other Christian. Colossians exalts Christ and shows our completeness in Him. Ephesians endears us to the church, as the bride of Christ and the temple of God. And, Philippians encourages us to rejoice in Christianity as a way of life. A study of Philippians is one that enriches our lives.

The assigned portion for our study is Philippians 1:11, “...*being filled with the fruits of righteousness, which are by Jesus Christ, unto the glory and praise of God*” and Philippians 3:3,

For we are the circumcision, which worship God in the spirit, and rejoice in Christ Jesus, and have no confidence in the flesh.

The Custom Of Paul To Pray

Philippians 1:11 is a part of that for which Paul said he prayed on behalf of the Philippians. It was Paul’s custom to pray for his brethren. He preached that principle for others.

...continuing instant in prayer (Rom. 12:12).

Be careful for nothing: but in every thing by prayer and supplication with thanksgiving let your requests be made known unto God (Phil. 4:6).

...pray without ceasing (I Thess. 5:17).

Brethren pray for us (I Thess. 5:25).

I will therefore that men pray everywhere, lifting up holy hands, without wrath and doubting (I Tim. 2:8).

But, he also practiced that principle in his own life. Only the epistle of Galatians is without some mention of Paul's praying for his brethren.

The Content Of His Prayer

He gave thanks for his brethren in Rome, Corinth, Ephesus, Philippi, Colossae, and Thessalonica. He prayed that his brethren might,

...do no evil; not that we should appear approved, but that ye should do that which is honest, though we be as reprobates (II Cor. 13:7);

This he did that they might grow and increase in Christian virtues (Phil. 1:7-9; Col. 1:9); that they would live acceptably (Col. 1:10), and be counted worthy of their calling that God might fulfill His will in them (II Thess. 1:11); and that they would be completely dedicated to the service of God (I Thess. 5:23). How many of those things are mentioned in our prayers today? Many public prayers are beautiful and, no doubt, acceptable, but could they not be better if we learned to pray for our brethren as did the apostle Paul?

The Confidence Of Paul

Paul faced many obstacles in his life, as do all faithful children of God. The Holy Spirit, through inspired penmen, sought to equip the saints with instructions to help us overcome those obstacles. One of the things that can trouble us is the object of our confidence. In Philippians 3:3, Paul states that those who are of the spiritual circumcision, "...*have no confidence in the flesh.*" Then, in verses five and six, he points to things that others, who are not faithful children of God, might have confidence in.

Ancestry gives some confidence. Jesus encountered this among the Pharisees, of whom Paul had been a part.

Then said Jesus to those Jews which believed on him, If ye continue in my word, then are ye my disciples indeed; And ye shall know the truth, and the truth shall make you free. They answered him, We be Abraham's seed, and were never in bondage to any man: how sayest thou, Ye shall be made free? (John 8:31-33).

A little further and they would say, “...*Abraham is our father...*” (John 8:39). Here were men who were relying on the fact that they were the descendants of Abraham. Their confidence was in their ancestry. In the same way today, people can rely on what their parents did or believed. Even in the church one can rely on the fact that his parents had a strong faith. But, he himself may be lacking faith, or at best have a weak faith. The confidence is not in God, but in the faith of parents. Each person must develop their own faith in order to be pleasing to God (Heb. 11:6).

Paul pointed out that he could have trusted in the admiration of men. He was a member of the Pharisees, a sect of the Jews noted for their strict application of the law of Moses and the traditions of the elders (Acts 26:5). And, Paul knew no one could bring any legitimate accusation against him concerning the law of Moses, for he was “...*blameless*” (Phil 3:6). Again, Jesus warned against the danger of letting the praises of mankind deceive us.

Woe unto you, when all men shall speak well of you! for so did their fathers to the false prophets (Luke 6:26).

No doubt, Jesus knew that if one placed his confidence in the admiration of men, he would compromise the truth in order to keep that admiration. Instead, Jesus said,

Blessed are ye, when men shall hate you, and when they shall separate you from their company, and shall reproach you, and cast out your name as evil, for the Son of man's sake. Rejoice ye in that day, and leap for joy: for, behold, your reward is great in heaven: for in the like manner did their fathers unto the prophets (Luke 6:22-23).

Paul wrote to the Corinthians,

For we dare not make ourselves of the number, or compare ourselves with some that commend themselves: but they measuring themselves by themselves, and comparing themselves among themselves, are not wise (II Cor. 10:12).

So, though Paul wanted to have a good influence, and admonished his brethren to so live as to have a good influence, he did not trust in the admiration of men. But, people can have a false sense of hope because they have the admiration and approval of friends. We must not mistake the judgments of men for the judgment of God.

Paul did not have any confidence in the activities of his past. His zeal for his old religion had been great, perhaps greater than many, for he had been “...persecuting the church...” (Phil. 3:6). To the Galatians Paul wrote,

For ye have heard of my conversation in time past in the Jews' religion, how that beyond measure I persecuted the church of God, and wasted it: And profited in the Jews' religion

above many my equals in mine own nation,
being more exceedingly zealous of the
traditions of my fathers (Gal. 1:13-14).

Paul’s defense before Agrippa included the admission that,

...many of the saints did I shut up in prison,
having received authority from the chief
priests; and when they were put to death, I
gave my voice against them. And I punished
them oft in every synagogue, and compelled
them to blaspheme; and being exceedingly mad
against them, I persecuted them even unto
strange cities (Acts 26:10-11).

Even though Paul was sincere (Acts 23:1), he did not rely on his past activities to make him approved before God. So, we must not rest on past labors and activities. One may be able to say, *“I have read through the Bible several times in my life.”* But, the question is, *“When did you last read the Bible?”* It is true *“...God is not unrighteous to forget your work and labour of love...”* (Heb. 6:10). But, it is also true that Paul exhorted the Galatians, *“And let us not be weary in well doing: for in due season we shall reap, if we faint not”* (Gal. 6:9). We must continually serve God as long as we have life and opportunity.

Any accomplishments that Paul might have attained meant nothing to him in seeking salvation. He said, *“But what things were gain to me, those I counted loss for Christ”* (Phil. 3:7). He had *“...profited in the Jews’ religion above many my equals...”* (Gal. 1:14). But, these meant nothing to Paul. He did not have any confidence in those things. We have many brothers and sisters who are talented and receive awards and recognition for their diverse abilities. However, we must not be misled into

believing that this merits anything for us with God. We are still in need of redemption. And, we must look outside of ourselves to find that salvation.

Paul's confidence rested in the spiritual. His confidence was in the Christ and in His cross. To the young evangelist, Timothy, Paul wrote,

For the which cause I also suffer these things: nevertheless I am not ashamed: for I know whom I have believed, and am persuaded that he is able to keep that which I have committed unto him against that day (II Tim. 1:12).

On another occasion, he said,

But God forbid that I should glory, save in the cross of our Lord Jesus Christ, by whom the world is crucified unto me, and I unto the world (Gal. 6:14).

Paul looked outside of himself for the confidence to live for God and to live with God eternally. He recognized his dependence upon God for all that he had and for all that he was. He said, "*But by the grace of God I am what I am...*" (I Cor. 15:10).

A Contrast Of Flesh And Spirit

Paul's confidence sets before us a contrast between the Flesh and the Spirit. One contrast is seen in one's values. What does one count as loss and what does one count as gain? There is a great deal of difference in the values of the flesh and those of the spirit. Paul wrote to the Romans that,

...they that are after the flesh do mind the things of the flesh; but they that are after the Spirit the things of the Spirit (Rom. 8:5).

Jesus said,

Lay not up for yourselves treasures upon earth, where moth and rust doth corrupt, and where thieves break through and steal: But lay up for yourselves treasures in heaven, where neither moth nor rust doth corrupt, and where thieves do not break through nor steal: For where your treasure is, there will your heart be also (Matt. 6:19-21).

Our affections are to be “...*on things above, not on things on the earth*” (Col. 3:2). But for those whose values are of the flesh, Paul said,

Whose end is destruction, whose God is their belly, and whose glory is in their shame, who mind earthly things (Phil. 3:19).

Because our values are different, our priorities are different. We make decisions every day based on what is important to us. When we have to choose between two things, that which is important to us will take priority. Notice that Paul said,

Brethren, I count not myself to have apprehended: but this one thing I do, forgetting those things which are behind, and reaching forth unto those things which are before, I press toward the mark for the prize of the high calling of God in Christ Jesus (Phil. 3:13-14).

He had earlier written “*For to me to live is Christ, and to die is gain*” (Phil. 1:21). It becomes obvious that Paul placed the spiritual first in his life. Such is indicated by the prayer he prayed as noted in chapter one. Six times in chapter one Paul will speak of the gospel. Paul focused on Christ, His cross, the church, and every spiritual

element that would clothe him in righteousness, quench the hunger of his soul, and give him an eternal home with God in heaven.

But, another contrast can be seen in that those who are spiritual are obedient. Their lives are such as “...becometh the gospel of Christ...” (Phil. 1:27). They have the mind of Christ who was “...obedient unto death, even the death of the cross” (Phil. 2:8). They would “...walk by the same rule...mind the same thing” (Phil. 3:16). And, they would be found doing “Those things, which ye have both learned, and received, and heard, and seen...” in Paul (Phil. 4:9). Those who are spiritual are obedient to the will of God in every aspect of life. But, those of the flesh are not obedient. Paul spoke of some,

...that they are the enemies of the cross of Christ: Whose end is destruction, whose God is their belly, and whose glory is in their shame, who mind earthly things (Phil. 3:18-19).

To the Romans, Paul wrote,

For they that are after the flesh do mind the things of the flesh; but they that are after the Spirit the things of the Spirit. For to be carnally minded is death; but to be spiritually minded is life and peace. Because the carnal mind is enmity against God: for it is not subject to the law of God, neither indeed can be (Rom. 8:5-7).

The contrast between the works of the flesh and the fruit of the Spirit (Gal. 5:19-23) is a contrast between those who obey God and those who do not. If we follow the teachings of the Gospel, as given by inspiration of the Holy Spirit, we will have and manifest the fruit of the Spirit. But, if we reject the Gospel, we will manifest

the works of the flesh, for we will be living after the flesh and not after the Spirit.

One other contrast, among many that could be noted, is that those after the Spirit enjoy blessings that those after the flesh do not enjoy. Those after the Spirit have “*Grace...and peace, from God...*” (Phil. 1:2). They have the hope that at death they will “*...depart and to be with Christ...*” (Phil. 1:23). One who is spiritual can “*Rejoice in the Lord...*” (Phil. 4:4). They enjoy “*...peace of God, which passeth all understanding...*” (Phil. 4:7). The riches of God are expended to “*...supply all your need...*” (Phil. 4:19). And they enjoy fellowship with the best people in this world (Phil. 1:5-8; 2:19-30). These do not make us arrogant but appreciative. They do not make us great but grateful. The faithful child of God has riches that the men and women of this world do not enjoy and never can as long as they stay in and of the world.

Being filled with fruits of righteousness will promote the kind of living that will provoke others to emulate such and to provide us with the hope of living with God eternally in heaven. May God grant us the wisdom and the will to seek the fruits of righteousness, and to be a spiritually minded people.

Chapter 10

“Fellowship In The Gospel” “Fellowsoldier”

• Philippians 1:5; 2:1, 20-25 •

Curtis A. Cates



Curtis has preached for over thirty years • He is holder of several academic degrees including an Ed.D. from the University of Alabama and post doctoral studies at Abilene Christian University • Curtis has taught at several schools and colleges • Author of several books and tracts • Director of the Memphis School of Preaching, editor of lectureship books • Annette and Curtis have two sons.

The outstanding **Truth in Love Lectureship** is ever on the cutting edge of the propagation of the pure gospel and ever “*set for the defense of the gospel.*” This is seen also in this year’s theme, “**Pressing Toward the Prize,**” a study of key passages from Philippians. God bless the East Hill elders and lectureship director, Paul Sain, for their outstanding work in the kingdom and their courageous and loving stand for the truth.

Introduction

The apostle Paul loved his brethren, for whose salvation he had hazzarded his very life. Certainly a case in point is his having been grievously, brutally beaten in Philippi when he established the church there. Without doubt, his love for those brethren grew through the years; and, that love was reciprocated. In his letter to this great

church, one immediately is made aware of his deep affection for the Philippians; he bared his very heart to them. He lovingly greeted them as “*my brethren beloved and longed for, my joy and crown*” (4:1). They were his “*true yokefellow[s]*.” And, all through the years, in joy and sorrow, in success and in adversity, the Philippian church “had fellowship with me [Paul] in the matter of giving and receiving” (4:15); in fact, they were the only congregation he had! They were very dear to Paul, who was at this time in a Roman prison.

Giving comfort to the brethren, even while a prisoner, was nothing new to the aged apostle. Amazingly, just after Paul and Silas were beaten and imprisoned in Philippi and later released,

...they went out of the prison, and entered into the house of Lydia: and when they had seen the brethren, they comforted them, and departed” (Acts 16:40).

Instead of feeling that they should be the ones comforted, Paul and Silas, even in the midst of their pain and recuperation, were giving consolation and encouragement. Others in the Philippian church had been “*partaker*” with Paul in this pagan persecution (1:7); they needed to realize that God through His providence could use these afflictions and their faithfulness and endurance in the face of severe persecutions for the “*progress of the gospel*” (1:12-14). Such suffering, for the sake of Christ, would contribute to the closeness naturally existing among fellow Christians, for which Christ prayed, which likely prevailed in Philippi except, evidently, for two women whom he exhorted “*to be of the same mind in the Lord*” (4:2). Such unity would be attained and maintained only by walking “*by that same rule*” (3:16), being thus perfected and of the same mind (3:15).

The burden of this study is to examine the relationship which Paul treasured with the brethren in Philippi, which he described in such endearing, loving and uniting terms as “*fellowship in the gospel*,” “*fellowship of the Spirit*,” “*fellow-worker*,” and “*fellow-soldier*.”

“Fellowship In The Gospel” (1:5)

I thank my God ... for your fellowship in furtherance of the gospel from the first day until now.

A life that is Savior-centered is a life that is in fellowship with God, Christ, and the Holy Spirit, as well as with all others who are in fellowship with the Godhead (I John 1:3-7). There are thus limitations of fellowship. Christian fellowship is precious indeed, a relationship which is to be maintained, nurtured, and prized. Its roots are in the “tender mercies of Christ,” held together by the love which abounds “*yet more and more in knowledge and all discernment*” (1:8,9) and bearing “*the fruits of righteousness, which are through Jesus Christ unto the glory and praise of God*” (1:11).

The word “*fellowship*,” from *koinonia*, can be defined as partnership, joint participation, financial contribution, etc. Whereas sometimes the word designates the more narrow meaning of fellowship in monetary giving, here evidently it is used in its broad sense, including all they had done relating to the apostle and his work in furthering the gospel. As alluded to earlier, this fellowship (or joint participation) had begun in Philippi when Paul and Silas certainly had their sympathy and prayers as they were being beaten and confined in the dungeon, as the penitent jailer was washing their stripes (before he was baptized into Christ), as they were encouraged by the church before departing for Thessalonica. This would also have included

when “even in Thessalonica ye sent once and again unto my need” (Phil. 4:1); when, at the time Paul was in Corinth (Acts 18:5), “the brethren, when they came from Macedonia, supplied the measure of my want” (II Cor. 11:9); when, at this very time while Paul is in prison, the Philippians,

...had fellowship with my affliction ... But I have all things, and abound: I am filled, having received from Epaphroditus the things that came from you, an odor of a sweet smell, a sacrifice acceptable, well-pleasing to God (Phil. 4:14,18).

The very presence of Epaphroditus, whom the brethren in Philippi sent, was a tremendous blessing to Paul, as were the things he brought from this great church!

Though Paul often tried not to burden financially those brethren where he was in the process of planting the church of Christ, he certainly had the right to be supported of the gospel in those places while preaching the gospel to them. Paul was much aware that the Judaizers, enemies of the cross, would make any excuse to attempt to undermine the apostle’s authority and credibility.

Were Paul to accept support, as in the churches of Galatia when planting them or in Corinth, they would feign that he was “*preaching for money.*” If, on the other hand, Paul worked with his own hands in tent-building, they would accuse him of not feeling that his preaching was worth being supported financially. With such prejudiced and bitter enemies, Paul attempted to be as “*wise as serpents, and as harmless as doves.*” But, try as he did, with those bitter against the truth, one just cannot “*win.*” Albeit, with those who counted—God and those who loved the truth—Paul did win!

“Fellowship In The Spirit” (2:1)

If there is therefore any exhortation in Christ, if any consolation of love, if any fellowship of the Spirit, if any tender mercies and compassions....

Fellowship in the gospel (1:5) was made possible by the *“one Spirit,”* the third person in the Godhead, the Holy Spirit. Thus, Paul emphasized, in the second place, their joint participation which was made possible through the Spirit. In Paul’s giving of the true basis for unity in Christ, that unity (not union) for which Christ prayed (John 17:17-23), he, through the Spirit’s inspiration, spoke of the seven ones (Eph. 4:1-6)—One Body, unity of organization; One Spirit, unity of revelation; One Hope, unity of aim; One Lord, unity of authority; One Faith, unity of doctrine; One Baptism, unity of practice; and One God, unity of worship. In chapter two of Philippians, Paul stresses the overall subject of unity in Christ. *“...ye be the same mind, having the same love, being of one accord, of one mind...”* (2:2). There was no place for faction or selfishness in the kingdom (2:3-4). Now, how did they have *“fellowship of the Spirit”*?

They did indeed have wonderful fellowship in the kingdom. The word *“If”* could as well be translated *“Since”*— *“since there is exhortation in Christ,”* no doubt about it. One can compare Christ’s affirmation in John 14:3, *“And if I go and prepare a place for you, I come again and will receive you....”* He did go, did He not? His going was certain. There is tremendous encouragement from being in Christ; there is likewise great persuasion of the love in Christ. How encouraging and motivating is the fact that God gave His only begotten Son (John 3:16), that Christ shed His blood for us (Rom. 5:8; Heb. 2:9), and that His blood keeps us clean as we walk in

the light (I John 1:7)! Indeed, all spiritual blessings are in Christ (Eph. 1:3), in the church (Eph. 1:23). In Christ, there is comfort and assurance, shared mutually by all faithful children of God. The alien sinner is immersed in water into Christ, upon penitent belief and confession that Christ is God’s Son (I Cor. 12:13; Rom. 6:1-4; Gal. 3:26-27). It is truly great to be a Christian! These indescribable blessings spur one on to greater faithfulness, devotion, and service. The congregation at Philippi had through the years been characterized by deep appreciation and love for and by living in peace with each other; this unity was to be preserved. His words were reminiscent of Paul’s exhortation to the Corinthians, in closing his second letter:

Finally, brethren, farewell. Be perfected; be comforted; be of the same mind; live in peace: and the God of love and peace shall be with you....All the saints salute you (II Cor. 13:13).

Love for the Lord and for the brethren is a great motivation toward bearing one another’s burdens (Gal. 6:2) and sacrificing one for another, as did the Jerusalem church.

The “*fellowship of the Spirit*” was very significant to Paul, for the miraculous gifts which were possessed by Philippians through the laying on of the apostle’s hands revealed and confirmed the Word which united them in Christ. The purpose of those gifts was to reveal the truth and to demonstrate that the message was of God (Heb. 2:1-3). They performed miracles by the “*same*,” the one Holy Spirit. It was only by the revelation of truth that persons could say “*Jesus is Lord*” (I Cor. 12:3,4), and only thereby could they constitute one body in Christ (I Cor. 12:12-13). The miraculous was to last till the “*perfect*” was come, the completed revelation (I Cor. 13:8-

13; James 1:25; et al.). The miraculous was but temporary, till the church was full grown, and its purpose was for the building up of the body (Eph. 4:8-16),

...till we all attain unto the unity of the faith, and of the knowledge of the Son of God, unto a full grown man, unto the measure of the stature of the fulness of Christ.

Note the emphasis upon unity—oneness. To have the “*fellowship of the Spirit*” was the mind of Christ, which was revealed by the Holy Spirit through the inspired Word, into which the apostles were guided (John 16:13; 14:26).

Though the miraculous no longer exists, Christians still have that fellowship from the Spirit (brought about by the truth the Holy Spirit revealed), for we have the “*perfect law of Liberty*” (James 1:25),

...all things that pertain unto life and godliness, through the knowledge of him that called us by his own glory and virtue (II Peter 1:4).

When God’s people have fellowship, it is the fellowship that the Spirit’s Word brings about and makes possible. What the Holy Spirit does to God’s people, He does through the Word. It was not fellowship that the Holy Spirit brought about by a direct operation upon the heart of saint or sinner. Following His Word, the Bible, draws Christians closer in love and fellowship; they have the mind of Christ.

The mind of Christ is characterized by “*tender mercies and compassions*” toward fellow Christians. The Philippians truly had warm feelings and tender sympathies toward Paul in his afflictions and thus desired to meet every need he had to the best of their abilities (2:2).

“Fellowship In Labor” (2:20-24)

For I have no man likeminded [as Timothy], who will care truly for your state. For they all seek their own, not the things of Jesus Christ. But ye know the proof of him, that, as a child serveth a father, so he served with me in furtherance of the gospel. Him therefore I hope to send forthwith, so soon as I shall see how it will go with me: but I trust in the Lord that I myself also shall come shortly. But I counted it necessary to send to you Epaphroditus, my brother, and fellow-worker and fellow-soldier, and your messenger and minister to my need.

Being in Christ brings a very cherished companionship in His service. It is demonstrated in a keen concern and care for all other Christians, especially for those with whom one had labored in the Lord and with those whom one had converted and whose congregation he had a part in planting (often in the face of severe life threatening beatings and imprisonment, as in Philippi). In addition, the thought is ever before us, in the words of our dear Lord, *“Inasmuch as ye did it unto one of these my brethren, even these least, ye did it unto me”* (Matt. 25:40). Paul had a deep appreciation and concern for the church in Philippi; in fact, he was miserable not knowing their state. He wished to hear good news about their situation and thus to be comforted. His hope was that the Lord would, through His providence, allow Paul to send Timothy very shortly to Philippi, so that his fears would be allayed. He wished not to send another, but to send his child Timothy, his dear companion and friend. The Philippians also knew Timothy and had confidence in him.

Timothy was an unusually fine young man, who was courageous, unselfish, and unswervingly loyal to the

cause of Christ. One is known by his companionship. What does it say about Timothy for the inimitable apostle Paul to love him dearly and to praise him so highly? No doubt this confirmed the confidence in which Philippi already held Timothy (2:19).

In commending Timothy to the Philippians, the beloved apostle praised Timothy as having the same mind as Paul himself. In fact, there was no other person available whom he could send to Philippi who had this characteristic, no one who could feel so deeply toward them and their welfare as Paul and Timothy (2:20).

Knowing so well the pure, genuine nature of Timothy's heart, a heart filled with love toward God and toward the brotherhood, the apostle stated that it would come naturally for Timothy to care for them tenderly and deeply. It would be a natural-born concern, resulting in every effort expended to help them. One gets the picture of sincere endearment when the "*father*," who is in prison and cannot personally go to Philippi (Paul) sends his dear son (Timothy) to give them loving, sacrificial attention.

It was no doubt very sad to the imprisoned apostle that "*all seek their own, not the things of Jesus Christ*" (2:21). The Lord could not use them, though they were very much needed. Those who were in the region of Rome, likely both preachers and other children of God, were not willing to be "*put out*," not willing to make the sacrifice for their brethren, including perhaps those in Philippi. It may be that Paul sought for certain others to come to the help of Philippi. One can begin to see the background of the very regrettable, sad situation of the members of the church abandoning Paul just before his death when he needed their strength and encouragement. "*At my first defense no one took my part; but all forsook me: may it not be laid to their account*" (II Tim. 4:16). It is amazing

how “*Christians*” scatter when there are battles to be fought, work to be done, and precious souls to be strengthened! What a contrast to the great Jerusalem church who were of “*one heart and soul,*” who were “*together and had all things common,*” who sold their possessions and distribution was made to all in special times of need, who shared each other’s trials, and risked their very lives for the precious cause!

When it was time for the brethren to care for the state of Philippi, they cared only for their own state. Did not Christ warn that one can become enthralled by “*the care of the world, and the deceitfulness of riches, choke the word, and he becometh unfruitful*” (Matt. 13:22)? Is it not the case that if we care for the kingdom (Matt. 6:33), for the things divine (I Peter 5:7), and for fellow Christians (I Cor. 12:25), that God will care for us? They sought their own—their own selfish interests. How many persons today are just too busy, too preoccupied, too devoted to the cares of this world to develop their God-given abilities to become preachers of the Word, or elders, or deacons, or to become effective soul-winners, or encouragers of the sick and downtrodden, or restorers of the erring? Did the teaching of Christ concerning the talents apply only to His generation (Matt. 25)? Well, whose things are we to seek dear reader? Let the inspired apostle answer ~“*the things of Jesus Christ*”! Where shall **we** stand at the judgment? Shall we have done what the Lord commands? “*If any man would come after me, let him **deny** himself, and take up his cross, and follow me*” (Matt. 16:24).

The Philippians themselves had seen the “*proof*” of Timothy, how he made every sacrifice for the promotion of the kingdom. This indicates that Timothy had been with Paul in Philippi. They knew his character and devotion. They had seen the intensity of his love for the

Lord as well as for his father in the gospel, Paul (2:22). He did all within his power to uphold the hands of Paul, to support his work, to lessen his pain, to lighten his burdens. They were knit together in deep devotion.

Paul's sending Timothy to Philippi and its timing would depend greatly upon how Paul's trial went (2:23). Would he be released upon this imprisonment, or would he be condemned? There was great uncertainty. If condemned, he likely would soon be killed and thus would no longer need Timothy. If released, then he could likely spare Timothy to go check on the Philippians. Evidently, Paul feels that the matter will be decided soon (2:24), hopefully with his release, whereupon he would be able, also, personally to visit Philippi. Indeed, the young man Timothy and the aged apostle were companions in labor—and, tremendous examples to us today!

Fellow-Soldiers In Christ (2:25)

But I counted it necessary to send to you Epaphroditus, my brother and fellow-worker and fellow-soldier, and your messenger and minister to my need.

Paul now moves to another companion in Christ, Epaphroditus, who was himself from Philippi. He had been given a name which honored the goddess Venus Aphrodite, indicating his having been reared in the midst of idolatry. However, he had learned of the living and true God and had dedicated his life to Christ in obedience of the gospel, hearing the gospel (Rom. 10:17), believing the truth (Heb. 11:6; John 8:24), repenting of sin (Luke 13:3,5; Acts 2:38), confessing faith in Christ (Rom. 10:9-10; Acts 8:37), and being immersed in water for the remission of sins (Acts 2:38; 10:47-48; 22:16; I Peter 3:21; Col. 2:11-13) and in devoted faithfulness (Rev. 2:10).

Epaphroditus had recently come from Philippi to Rome, bringing with him the financial contribution and other necessities for the apostle Paul in his imprisonment.

But I have all things, and abound: I am filled, having received from Epaphroditus the things that came from you, an odor of a sweet smell, a sacrifice acceptable, well-pleasing to God (4:18).

While in Rome, Epaphroditus had become critically sick. Word of his dangerous illness had made its way to beloved brethren in Philippi, who were very grieved over it. Thus, as soon as Epaphroditus had recovered, Paul thought it expedient for Epaphroditus to return quickly to his home congregation, no doubt sending his letter to the Philippians by the hand of Epaphroditus (2:26-30).

The apostle in praising this great man of God used three powerful terms: brother, companion, and fellow-soldier. He was Paul’s “*brother*,” for both were in the church of Christ, the family of God (I Tim. 3:14-15), by virtue of having been led by the Word of the Spirit to be baptized in water, and thereby born into God’s household. Children of God have and share a beautiful, indescribable closeness; indeed, we are “*family*.” They were companions in the greatest work on earth. And, they were “*fellow-soldiers*.”

Often, God’s people seem to forget that there is a great battle going on in this world between everything that is good and everything that is bad, between light and dark, between good and evil, between right and wrong, between Christ and Satan, between the kingdom of God and the kingdom of the devil. Furthermore, each of us is in the middle of the battle. The battle is engaged for the souls and minds of each of us. And, there is no

neutral ground. Each of us is engaged in the fight, either on the Lord's side or on the devil's side. The Lord Himself stated, "*He that is not with me is against me, and he that gathereth not with me scattereth*" (Matt. 12:30). All of us are soldiers in an army, either the Lord's army or Satan's army. We are either a part of the storming of Satan's stronghold, or we are in Satan's stronghold. The Lord desired for us to be extricated from Satan's stronghold, or kingdom.

...who hath delivered us out of the power of darkness, and translated us into the kingdom of the Son of his love; in whom we have redemption, the forgiveness of our sins (Col. 1:13-14).

Both Paul and Epaphroditus were true soldiers. They realized the seriousness of the battle, and they were on the front line. Neither was a turncoat who would run from the battle; neither would flee even when their very physical lives were in danger. They certainly would in no way give comfort to the enemy; they were no cowards. No wonder the apostle could say to Timothy, "*Suffer hardship with me, as a good soldier of Christ Jesus*" (II Tim. 2:3)!

Our Captain is Jesus Christ, who suffered grievously and set the perfect example before each of us, His soldiers (I Peter 2:21).

For it became him, for whom are all things, and through whom are all things, in bringing many sons unto glory, to make the author [captain, KJV] of their salvation perfect through sufferings (Heb. 2:10).

Christ did not call legions of angels to rescue Him from grievous mistreatment and death; He did not come down from the cross (Heb. 12:2). Epaphroditus did not shrink

back at the news of Paul’s imprisonment but rather came to his assistance; he faced the possibility of imprisonment, beatings, and death to comfort and meet the needs of his beloved brother in Christ! God’s people are not cowardly, compromising, and fearful when the battle is engaged; they do not cower when the battle lines are drawn; they do not crouch quiveringly when the enemy is identified, challenged, engaged, and refuted. They do not tremble in their “*combat boots*” when the Christian warriors sing “*Onward Christian Soldiers.*” One can be certain that irenic, compromising, liberal brethren do not have the courage necessary to challenge sectarianism and storm the strongholds of Satan. They are not watchmen on the wall, but rather give comfort to the enemy and expose God’s own people to those who would destroy His very cause. They are reminiscent of the priests of Marduk in Babylon, who let down the draw-bridges to Darius the Mede, assisting the enemy to capture the city in one night. Dear reader, how many preachers and elders do you know who present olive branches of compromise to heretics and even bring the soldiers of Satan into their midst, rather than brandishing the “*sword of the Spirit,*” as commanded (Eph. 6:17)? Epaphroditus was the type soldier whom Paul could highly commend and on whom he could always depend. Indeed, this soldier could be trusted faithfully to deliver a message and to minister, or serve. He would not tamper with the words he was to deliver. The person who sends a message abhors one’s tampering with that message. A curse rests upon those who would deliver a perverted message, as if from God (Gal. 1:6-9; I Peter 4:11; Jude 3; II John 9-11; Rev. 22:18-19). Like Paul, Epaphroditus, and Timothy, let us “*Fight the good fight of faith, lay hold on the life eternal*” (I Tim. 6:12).

Conclusion

The beloved apostle Paul was a great warrior in God's army. He did not seek his own good but the good of others. He underwent many hardships. Very special and tremendously encouraging were those trusted Christians with whom he had fellowship and upon whom he could depend, including especially the church in Philippi and such co-workers as Timothy, Titus, and Epaphroditus. Those who shall hear "Well done..." certainly include those who meet the needs of God's people who are in prison, as the Philippians did for Paul (Matt. 25:31-40). A crown of life await them, as it does the apostle (II Tim. 4:6-8), inasmuch as he had "fought the good fight." May we also so live as to receive that crown.

Chapter 11

“Enemies Of The Cross Of Christ” ~ Their Walk And Destination

• Philippians 3:2, 18-19; 1:27•

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It is a joy supreme to come each year and participate on this good and great lectureship here at East Hill. My genuine gratitude hereby is expressed to Paul Sain, the elders and this entire congregation. East Hill is a sound and solid congregation and, as it were, a beacon on a hill shining forth the word of light and life to a world darkened with sin and shame.

It is a very sad commentary on humanity that Christ has been hated, continues to be hated and will be hated by those not yet born if time continues. Yet this has been the continuing stance of His enemies toward Him who has ever been the Personification of virtue, purity, service and selfishness. It still is this way though we lament that such is the case. Prophecy indicates He would be hated (Psm. 35:19; 69:4; Isa. 53). Its flagrant fruition came while Christ was here (John 1:11-12; 15:23-

25). It is amazingly amazing that men hate Him who is the very Personification of loyal love and that they count Him an enemy who alone has made redemption possible by Calvary. He is the very one who can dissolve the enmity that sin has created between the fallen and their Creator on holy high.

The Pauline Depiction Of Them

In writing to the precious people at Philippi, Paul delineated these undesirables as follows,

For many walk, of whom I have told you often, and now tell you even weeping, that they are the enemies of the cross of Christ: Whose end is destruction, whose God is their belly, and whose glory is in their shame, who mind earthly things (Phil. 3:18-19).

It must have pained greatly the magnanimous heart of this sensitive apostle to portray these poisonous personalities. Yet, he did not refuse to note them in the name of spineless toleration as many do with the proponents of error in our pluralistic society where anything goes and nothing ever needs to be exposed or refuted. It is a strange world that now surrounds us—vastly different than the generation that preceded us.

Marked Contrasts Drawn

Paul styled them as walkers. They were walking the ways of wickedness, the trails of transgression, the paths of perdition. Unlike Enoch and Noah of patriarchal times they were not walking with God (Gen. 5:21-24; 6:9). Unlike Abraham they were totally disinterested in walking before God with perfect (spiritually mature) hearts (Gen. 17:1). Unlike what Moses desired for Israel they were not about to walk after God thus making Him

the Grand Model (Deut. 13:4). Unlike what Micah counseled his peers to do in Micah 6:8 they were not about to do justly, love mercy and walk humbly with the Just Jehovah. Unlike Pauline counsel to the Colossians they were not the least bit interested in a walk in the Lord (Col. 2:6). Unlike what Paul inculcated for his fellow Philippian saints to do they were not about to walk by the rules of the Redeemer (3:16). They were not about to engage in a worthy walk, such as Paul did, in order that others might be followers or imitators of Him (3:17; I Cor. 11:1). Stedfast and solid saints at Philippi were interested in the foregoing and being ensamples to others but these enemies of Calvary were not enrolled in this noble number. They were molded by a different model; they were pursuing a different pattern for emulation. Not being disciples of Deity and practitioners of piety they were disciples of the devil for a surety. Paul riveted his attention upon these undesirables in order that the pious Philippians might not be hoodwinked by their teachings and mode of lifestyles.

An Earlier Depiction Of Them

In the first part of Philippians 3 Paul wrote of these same enemies by declaring, *“Beware of dogs, beware of evil workers, beware of the concision”* (v. 2). Thrice in this short verse Paul employed a sobering BEWARE. Each is a spiritual red light flashing great and grievous dangers. False teachers, enemies of Calvary, are on the front burner in Paul’s cogent warning. Incidentally, such warning would have been unnecessary if the doctrine of *“once-saved-always-saved”* were true. There are something like 2,500 warnings in Sacred Writ relative to the dangers of falling from grace. This is but one of

that staggering number.

They are styled dogs—not the four-legged variety. They are impudent; they bark at the gospel which they despise; they snarl at truth which is so distasteful to them; they viciously bite or devour those who oppose their infamous errors and flagrant falsehoods.

They are evil workers. The domain of the good is off base to them; it is no magnet of attraction to them. Their major in life is mischief. Such is their stock-in-trade. They are proficient in pernicious propaganda; it is spiritual arsenic to every partaker. They work but theirs is not a labor of love or a work of faith such as Paul inculcated in I Thessalonians 1:3.

They are the concision or the mutilators of flesh. Their major in life is to compel all to submit to the fleshly rite of Judaistic circumcision. They were the Judaizing forces of that era who dogged the steps of faithful Paul every place he went and were devoted thorns in his apostolic ministry. Paul here refused to call them the circumcision but simply styled them the concision. Those who are the true circumcision are described in Philippians 3:3; Colossians 2:11 and Romans 2:28-29.

Tragically, They Number Into The Many

Not just a few occupy this notorious camp but the many. It would be tragic enough if only one or just a few occupied this sinful stance but Paul used neither one nor a few in calculating the noxious number. He used many. Only a few were saved in the ark with many perishing. Only two of those twenty and above who left the Land of the Nile entered Canaan at last—Joshua and Caleb; the unnumbered many perished short of Canaan's goal. Elijah stood alone on majestic Mount

Carmel in I Kings 18 as Jehovah’s champion; the many were uncommitted or were devotees of Baal. Jeremiah knew of the few pious in his day and of the faithless many. In Matthew 7:13-14 Jesus knew those traveling the strait and narrow road would be few but many would be the number on the road to eternal damnation. Jesus knew that many are called but few chosen (Matt. 20:16). Paul stressed that among the wise, mighty and noble of his day not many will respond to the tugging power of towering truth (I Cor. 1:26ff).

It has not changed from Bible times to our day. Comparatively speaking, few of this century have obeyed the gospel; the many occupy the same ground as did those portrayed so pathetically in Philippians 3:18-19—enemies of Christ and Calvary.

Pauline Tears

This was not the initial time Paul informed the Philippians of such haters of Christ, such enemies of Calvary. Frequent had been the timely warnings he had sounded in their ears and upon their hearts. Profuse, no doubt, had been the tears shed each time he delineated such. In the present penning there was no exception. He wrote this with weeping. Tears may have stained the very pages of this apostolic document sent to Philippi from his first Roman imprisonment (Acts 28:30-31). He may have used a penman, as frequently he did, but doubtless read it himself before sending it on to this Macedonian city. Tears may have dotted each page.

Paul’s was a tear-stained ministry. In this he emulated his Master who wept on the way to Lazarus’ tomb and over Jerusalem’s adamancy (John 11:35; Matt. 22:37). His long tenure in Ephesus was one in which he shed many tears (Acts 20:19). Note the sorrows

manifested in Paul's departure from weeping Ephesian elders in Acts 20:36ff. Paul wrote I Corinthians with many tears shed as he expressed in I Corinthians 2:4.

There had been a time in Acts 7, 8 and part of 9 when Saul was an avowed enemy of Calvary. He hated the cross and Him who died thereon. But all that was in his painful past. Now it grieved him greatly that men could hear of the redemptive riches abundantly available in Christ and meet such with a sneer and turn up their snobbish noses at such. He knew such people were digging their own graves spiritually. They were speeding toward hell and were not interested in being arrested or slowed down in their plunge into perdition.

Paul wept unashamedly as he thought of men so duped by Satan and deceived by sin as to line up against Christ and stand in opposition to Calvary. This was more than Paul could fathom. We sense a similar sentiment toward modern enemies of Calvary of which our current and corrupt world is filled to overflowing. Tinged with sadness we observe that this notorious number is not a diminishing one but an ever increasing one.

Who Were And Are Enemies Of Calvary?

In Paul's day they were the Judaizers. They were the false teachers of that era. They were men such as Hymenaeus, Alexander, Philetus, Phygellus, Hermogenes and Demas the deserter (I Tim. 1:19-20; II Tim. 2:17; 1:15; 4:14; 4:10). I wonder, if Paul were alive today, if he would agree to moderate an Open Forum and NEVER call a name!! It is shameful that such is developing among us but it is! They were those who had at one time accepted the truth, been loyal to it and then forsook it. They were those who like Felix, Festus, Agrippa, Bernice and others who heard the truth but refused to

bend to its stringent and strict demands. They were the Pharisees and Sadducees who determined to stay with ancestral traditions and religions giving NO consideration to the new religion of Jesus Christ.

In our day they are the atheists, agnostics, infidels, modernists, theological liberals, denominational advocates for man-made churches, World Religion devotees, lukewarm church members still in love with Satan and sin, the immoral, the irreverent and all criminals of our secular and pragmatic society. They are the Change Agents, a new group who has risen to sabotage the Messianic Cause on earth. Their avowed purpose, a Satanic one to the very core, is to sink the stately ship of Zion. They leave no stone unturned in bashing the church, in belittling the precious bride of Jesus Christ.

Their Walk

In verse 19 Paul depicts their destination and then gives a threefold description of their walk. The latter three will be discussed first with their destination or destructive end discussed next.

(1) Their God is their belly. Negatively, we know some things about this group. Their God is not Jehovah. Their Saviour is not Jesus Christ. They do not look to the Holy Spirit as the Divine Revealer of truth, of saving truth. Their standard is not the word of the living God. They care nothing about the Abrahamic promises developed across the Bible ages from this patient patriarch to the time of Christianity. They care nothing about prophecy and its precious, precise fulfillment in the Christ. They care nothing about His life, teachings, sacrifice on Calvary, resurrection, Great Commission, the ascension or the church He established in regal

splendor on that memorable Pentecost. They care nothing about Christian worship, service to others, the mission of the church, its organization, its names, the first law of pardon, the second law of pardon or whether the church survives from generation to generation. They are totally oblivious to all of the foregoing. This is the posture of all enemies of Christ and His cross.

They had a god all right and it was nearby. It was their belly. This is used as the seat of their passions. Their counterpart on the island of Crete was described by Paul in Titus 1:12 as “*slow bellies*” or “*idle gluttons.*” These are graphic ways of affirming their fulfillment of every lustful passion. They knew firsthand about the lusts of the flesh and the lust of the eyes (I John 2:15-17). Instant gratification was their cup of tea. They were lascivious and licentious. If it felt good, they did it. Modern man does the same. It is practiced from the highest official of our government on down. Even those who do not practice this philosophy will condone those who do.

(2) They gloried in their shame. Their glory was not in God, the Christ, the Spirit, the church, the gospel with its plan of pardon or the hope of heaven in the sweet by and by. Their glory was not in the fruit of the Spirit—love, joy, peace, longsuffering, gentleness, goodness, faith or faithfulness, meekness and temperance or self-control (Gal. 5:22-23). Their glory was not in the Christian graces—foundational faith with virtue, knowledge, temperance, patience, godliness, brotherly kindness and charity or love added or supplied (II Peter 1:5ff). Their glory was not in self-denial with Christ and others put ahead of selfish intents. Their glory was not in strong churches, solid homes and well-rounded individuals who led lives of sobriety, righteousness and

godliness. Their glory was not in seeing the lost saved, edified and on their way to Heavenly Canaan. Their glory was not in the Godhead who could turn the world around if the gospel were believed and obeyed. Their glory was not in Christ and Calvary such as Paul possessed and expressed so eloquently in Galatians 6:14. From his conversion in Damascus onward he gloried in that which he thought he would NEVER experience glory in his days as the champion persecutor for Phariseism. If we re-read this section of Scripture and change each “*was*” in this paragraph to an “*is*,” one has enemies of Christ and Calvary in portrait form today. Disciples of the devil and servants of Satan do not change from generation to generation or from century to century. Their glory was/is in Satan, in sin, in impurity, in wrongdoing, in crime and in corruption.

In summary, sin is their solid stance; mischief is their major in life; lasciviousness is their lifestyle. It matters not in the least how many they make mourn or crush just as long as they get their wicked way. Callousness has taken over any sensitivity of soul they once may have possessed. They were/are oblivious to everything that is good, right, pure and proper. Jeremiah described well the condition of their heart when he wrote some twenty-six centuries ago, “*The heart is deceitful above all things, and desperately wicked: who can know it*” (Jer. 17:9). He was describing the same type individual in his age as Paul did in his era. Enemies of Christ and Calvary of our day still possess the same type of deceitful heart.

(3) They mind earthly things. Like the rich farmer in Luke 12:16-21 they saw fruits and goods—not faith and God. Like those in John 6 to whom the Lord addressed, they were more interested in loaves and fishes

than the love of God and faith centered in Christ. Like the immoral and even the amoral in II Peter 2:14, they saw every desirable woman as an eager quest for an adulterous liaison. The sooner they could orchestrate such an illicit union the better they liked it. They thrived on instant gratification. The salvation of their souls was on a distant back burner; it enjoyed no priority in their sensual system at all. Like the Sadducees, they sensed nothing beyond this life—no resurrection, no hell, no heaven. They manifested no interest in either their origin or their destiny. The “*here and now*” was ALL of it for them, the “*there and then*” was of no interest to them at all. They would never say what Paul did in Philippians 1:21-24. They would never be a Timothy and be Paul’s righthand man; they would never be an Epaphroditus and risk limb and life to aid an imprisoned apostle in distant Rome (Phil. 2:19-30; 4:19).

They were/are the total opposite of consecrated Christians who “*seek those things which are above, where Christ sitteth on the right hand of God.*” “*Set your affection on things above, not on things on the earth*” would be a meaningless expression to them (Col. 3:1-2).

Such naive people live for this world and NONE other. Permeating all their earthly purposes was/is the Epicurean philosophy of eating, drinking and being merry today for tomorrow we die (cf. I Cor. 15:32).

Their Destination

Verse 19 depicts cogently and clearly that their “*end is destruction.*” The American Standard Version uses “*perdition.*” Both terms mean the same as the following Scriptures certainly teach. Travelers in Matthew 7:14 who enter the broad way by the wide gate are headed for destruction. The text so states. Peter

used perdition in II Peter 3:7 which is translated as destruction in the ASV. Peter was speaking of the destiny of ungodly people. Either destruction or perdition describes this ultimate fate. Jesus called the lost Judas Iscariot “*the son of perdition*” in John 17:12. We know what his destiny is. Peter made that crystal clear in Acts 1:25 by portraying Judas who “*by transgression fell, that he might go to his own place.*” That place between death and judgment was not the comfort of Abraham’s bosom but the torment of Hadean punishment where the formerly rich man was consigned (cf. Luke 16:19-31). That place from final judgment onward will not be the heavenly home on high for the likes of Judas but the lake that burns with fire and brimstone. Judas has already paid a dear price for ceasing to be Christ’s friend and becoming His enemy. His greatest price of punishment is yet to be in Eternal Gehenna.

Enemies of the cross face a sure baptism (immersion) in the eternal flames of Gehenna (Matt. 3:11). As evil trees they are to be “*...hewn down, and cast into the fire*” (Matt. 7:19). They are to be “*...gathered and burned in the fire;...*” (Matt. 13:40). As practitioners of iniquity they shall be “*...cast them into a furnace of fire: there shall be wailing and gnashing of teeth*” (Matt. 13:41-42). Outer darkness is their sure destiny where “*...there shall be weeping and gnashing of teeth*” (Matt. 25:30). Those on Christ’s left hand at final judgment “*...shall go away into everlasting punishment...*” (Matt. 25:46). High is the price for being an enemy of Christ in life and dying in that tragic state. However, it is virtually impossible to warn such people now of what awaits them when earthly scenes they leave.

Thrice in the latter part of Mark 9 we read, “*Where their worm dieth not, and the fire is not quenched*” (vs.

44, 46, 48). Enemies of the cross are headed surely for this horrendous destiny. Luke 16:19-31 gives a clear picture of where such enemy of the cross will be between death and judgment—Hadean torments with unending anguish. Without exception each one will be exactly where the tormented rich man, rich in life but poverty stricken beyond physical death, was and still is!

Enemies of Calvary will be raised “...unto the resurrection of damnation” (John 5:29). Enemies of Calvary have rejected Christ and refused to receive His words. Severe indeed will be the sentence that the Judge of the living and the dead will impose on them (John 12:48). Their fiery destruction is portrayed again in John 15:6. Felix, in Acts 24, was an enemy of Christ. Paul sought to change that deadly status into dedicated service to the Lord. The pagan Governor trembled as judgment horrors were projected before him but remained unsaved. So did Drusilla, his adulterous wife. In preaching about Felix some years back a powerful preacher of the gospel said in my presence, as I attended a gospel meeting in which he preached, “*Felix did not tremble enough!*” And he did not, unfortunately!

In Romans 2:8-9 there will be,

...indignation and wrath, Tribulation and anguish, upon every soul of man that doeth evil, of the Jew first, and also of the Gentile.

Those who know not God and obey not the gospel of God will be the eternal victims of flaming fire and,

...shall be punished with everlasting destruction from the presence of the Lord, and from the glory of his power (II Thess. 1:8-9).

If enemies of Calvary ever bother to read II Thessalonians 1:6-9 they should tremble greatly for such

reveals their sure future minus any question or quibble to the contrary.

In II Peter 2 this inspired apostle spoke of punishment for the wicked. He did so graphically and with vivid forcefulness. Jude does more of the same in his terse missive (vs. 6-7, 15). The book of Revelation is filled with warnings to the wicked. Revelation 20:14-15 and 22:15 project hell for every enemy of God’s Lamb. While a young man, George W. DeHoff preached a sermon one night to a packed house. He preached on hell. At the end he inquired if anyone had any question. The hand of one man went up. He said, *“Young man, I hate to embarrass you but I do not believe in hell.”* Brother DeHoff looked all around for some older brother to help him but all men in his audience seemed perfectly willing for the young preacher to handle the situation. Brother DeHoff asked the man to turn in his Bible and read Revelation 23. The man said, *“Son, I hate to embarrass you but Revelation does not have twenty-three chapters, it has only twenty-two.”* Brother DeHoff responded by saying, *“I know that. John has people in hell in Revelation 22 and I thought you might have an additional chapter to get them out!”* No veteran preacher, regardless of how old, could have handled that situation any more skillfully than did DeHoff the boy preacher.

Spiritual Safeguards

The book of Philippians is a mighty bulwark in keeping us faithful as soldiers and not faithless as enemies of Calvary. We need to have an abounding love and a rich increase in knowledge and discernment (1:9). We need to approve things that are excellent, be sincere, minus offense till the day of Christ and filled with the fruits of righteousness (1:10-11). We need to be set for

the defense of the gospel (1:17). We need to be able to say with Paul, “*For to me to live is Christ, and to die is gain*” (1:21). Our lives need to become or befit the gospel; we need to stand fast in one spirit and possess that one mind striving for the faith of the gospel (1:27). We need the mind of Christ which was the united mind, the submissive mind, the sacrificial mind, the selfless mind, the humble mind and the victorious mind (2:5ff). We need to work out our “*...own salvation with fear and trembling*” (2:12). We need to let our lights shine (2:15). We need to hold forth the word of life (2:16). We need to emulate the loyalty, love and sympathy of Timothy and Epaphroditus (2:19-30). We need to make preparation for heaven as Paul urged the precious Philippians to do in chapter 3. We need to stand fast, help fellow laborers of the Lord, be prayerful, be pure and noble in thought, be content and be benevolent as Paul outlined so excellently and eloquently in chapter four.

Conclusion

Enemies of Christ and Calvary walk the way of wickedness; they are riding a speeding roller coaster to their hellish destination. Hadean torments and Eternal Gehenna await them for a certainty.

Chapter 12

The Man Of God In Philippians

• Philippians 1:3, 6-7, 10 •

Keith A. Mosher, Sr.



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If ever the apostle Paul could be said to love a congregation of God’s people, it is certain indeed that he did dote upon the church at Philippi. Those first-century Christians were thought of by Paul as his “joy and crown” and “dearly beloved” (Phil. 4:1). The Philippians had provided Paul with emotional, spiritual, and financial comfort (Phil. 4:10, 14, 18).

If ever a congregation of God’s people (besides the great and good brethren at Forest Hill who have devoted millions of hours and dollars to train preachers) has offered greater emotional, spiritual, and financial aid to Memphis School of Preaching than East Hill, that congregation is not known to the author. Her loyal elders and deacons, her faithful minister, and her loving members have come once and again to the support and defense of the school. **East Hill is Memphis School of Preaching’s “Phillipi.”** May God bless her as she devotes the years ahead to hosting her great lectureship,

sponsoring **Truth-In-Love** and spreading the good news.

East Hill has a “*Paul*,” too, and this beloved brother Sain is esteemed by all the faithful and dearly beloved for his character and work. To him and LaDon go my undying affection and thanks for the encouragement and inspiration afforded me over the years. It is truly a “*joy*” to know this couple.

Brother Sain has assigned me the task of writing about the “*man of God*” as seen in the Philippian letter. It was a humbling experience to study the text with such a theme in view and to realize how far short of such a title as “*man of God*” that I am. I am grateful, however, for the challenge simply because the study helped me so much. Perhaps those who read the manuscript or hear the oral presentation will be as encouraged as I was to make greater effort to be a man (or woman) of God as pictured in the magnificent epistle from the prolific pen of Paul to his beloved Macedonian church.

Introduction

It is well-attested and usually well-known that the apostle Paul was in a Roman prison during the time he wrote the missive to the church at Philippi (Phil. 1:23; 2:17). Paul was an “*ambassador in bonds*” having been arrested in Jerusalem, bound to a Roman soldier, locked in a prison for two years in Caesarea, and finally extradited to Rome (Eph. 6:20; Acts 21:33; 23:25-26:32). However, despite such woeful treatment from his countrymen, Paul maintained a wonderful (nearly inexplicable) attitude toward God and life. Why? Paul was a “*man of God*” (Phil. 4:13).

One of the great tragedies of life today is the seemingly sheer aimlessness and purposelessness of the vast majority of humans. Paul is the model of a different

way of living from the world's and because of his attitude became the greatest missionary (except for the Lord), even in prison, who ever lived! Paul's life evidences the exceedingly important fact that one must live for something; one must have a purpose and one must keep that purpose in view (Phil. 3:13-14). The world drifts as a helpless vessel and in Robert Whitaker's words:

Thou canst ne'er to life be true; Half the wrecks
that strew life's ocean...If some star had been
their guide; Might have long been riding safely;
But they drifted with the tide.¹

Men of God, as Paul, have a purpose and goal in life, which aims sustain, succor, and strengthen in every situation. Years ago the author heard Wendell Winkler preach expositively from Philippians on the subject, “*The Christian Life*.”² Brother Winkler outlined Christian living from the epistle (taking one point from each chapter) as **Saviour—Centered** (chapter one); **Self-Emptying** (chapter two); **Sound** (chapter three); and **Serene** (chapter four). The man of God exhibits the foregoing four traits (and more) and brother Winkler's outline is the basis for this study from Paul's epistle to his beloved brothers and sisters in Philippi.

The Man Of God As Seen In The Philippian Epistle Is Saviour-Centered (Phil. 1:1-26)

- I. By Praying Always (1:1-10)
- II. By Producing Fruit(1:11)
- III. By Preaching Good News..... (1:12-18)
- IV. By Practicing Optimism (1:19-26)

Is Self-Emptying (Phil. 1:27-2:4)

- I. By Evidencing Humility (1:27-2:4)
 - A. Through Effort(1:27)

- B. Through Example (1:28-30)
- C. Through Esteeming Others (2:1-4)
- II. By Expressing Christ-Likeness (2:5-30)
 - A. Through Employing a New Mind. (2:5-11)
 - B. Through Emulating the Faithful (2:12-30)

Is Sound (Phil. 3:1-21)

- I. By Remaining Aware of False Teachers (3:1-2)
- II. By Recalling One's Past (3:3-11)
- III. By Reaching For Heaven (3:12-21)

Is Serene (Phil. 1:23)

- I. From Steadfast Joy (4:1-4)
- II. From Self-Control (4:5)
- III. From Suppliant Prayer (4:6-7)
- IV. From Sober-Mindedness (4:8)
- V. From Saviour-Centered Strength (4:9-23)

The Man Of God Is Saviour-Centered

Saviour-centeredness involves prayer (Phil. 1:1-10); production of fruit (Phil. 1:19-26); preaching (Phil. 1:12-18); and practicing optimism (Phil. 1:19-26). Paul exhibited these imperatives of the man of God, not only during his life's pleasant times, but especially during the darker moments of his suffering for the cause of Christ (cf. Phil. 4:12).

Praying Always

The man of God has a basis for prayer that concerns him with his fellow saints (Phil. 1:3-4). Every time Paul remembers (**mneia**, always used in connection with prayer)³ he mentioned his brethren to the Lord. Such a prayer was filled with joy, but not so in every prayer;

especially when Paul prayed for his **lost** countrymen (Rom. 10:1). The man of God is filled with joy for the saved and sorrow for the lost.

That which inspired the close fellowship between the man of God and his brethren was the gospel (Phil. 1:5). That fellowship resulted in joint participation (Phil. 1:7) and financial support (Phil. 4:14) of Paul’s missionary efforts. Saints are always strong supporters of true men of God.

Note carefully that the praise for the work goes neither to the saints nor to Paul, but to the One who began the task and who will finish the good work—God (Phil. 1:6). The future indicates **epitelesei**⁴ which means that God will fully finish what He started if (and only if) the saints allow God so to do. God will not cease to work and men of God must not. Men of God must pray and work “without ceasing.” (Since praying and working are two activities, common sense would teach that such are attitudes not second by second workings. Not “*everything*” one does on a daily or hourly basis can be said to be prayers and works for God. But, the man of God is single-minded in the overall purpose for life.)

Men of God hold their fellow saints in their hearts and consider brethren to be the “*inner-circle*” or exclusive family of Christ (Phil. 1:7). Such co-sharers of the defense and confirmation of the glorious gospel of the risen Lord long to be with one another and to enjoy the fellowship in Christ (Phil. 1:8-9). Because of such desire, originating from the love and compassion of Jesus, men of God pray that each Christian’s love may abound; that each will learn to be discriminating about right and wrong things; that each will be sincere; that each will not cause others to stumble (Phil. 1:9-20a). A most important part of the prayer of men of God deserves special attention.

Producing Fruit

Men of God know that the Christian can not be barren in serving Christ. One must be filled with the fruit (plural)⁵ of righteousness including character (Gal. 5:22-23) and converts (Matt. 28:18-20).

Such righteousness is **epainon Theou**; that is, the only way one can be righteous is because of God.⁶ It seems that the man of God knows the source of his strength and lets that thought motivate him to produce. Certainly every Christian is not a public proclaimer as was Paul, but every disciple of Christ can and must work to support one of the singularly important activities in the kingdom of the Lord—the proclamation of the gospel.

Proclaiming Good News

Even though a man of God may be in prison, as was Paul, such a state should be viewed as just one more opportunity to tell others about salvation (Phil. 1:12-13). The man of God, by remaining focused on his life's purpose, can encourage others to speak boldly (**tolmeen**, freely)⁷ concerning Jesus (cf. Acts 4:29, 31; Phil. 1:14).

Some Jews once demanded of Christ that He speak plainly (John 10:24). The man of God, as his Master, must never let such sarcastic rejection as said to Jesus deter him from a clear presentation of the gospel. In fact, the man of God can "*rejoice*" over any presentation of truth even when he knows the one speaking it is not sincere (Phil. 1:15-18)! A man of God loves truth above life, for Christ is truth (John 14:26).

Practicing Optimism

The man of God believes that despite life's dark turns, all will "*turn out*" (Phil. 1:19—**apobeesetai**)⁸ to

his being delivered. Therefore, optimism rules his thoughts and results in never being “*ashamed*” (**aischuntheesomai** passive voice always, to have a feeling of fear or shame that prevents one from doing something).⁹ Paul was so free from physical fear that not only could he serve Christ in spirit, but also in body (Phil. 1:20). Robertson comments that “*It is often harder to make Christ great in the body than in the spirit.*”¹⁰

Optimism for the man of God results from knowing the choices: (1) One can live and serve Christ. (2) One can die and live with Christ (Phil. 1:20-26). A Christian commented to another that he was getting old. The latter replied, “*Well, considering the alternative I would rather be old!*” Such carnal thinking never could characterize Paul or any man of God. To Paul, life was Christ and death was Christ and there was no room for pessimism in either state.

Nineteen times in Philippians, chapter one, Paul mentions the Christ. It is that Saviour-centeredness that made that ancient apostle and magnificent man of God a praying, preaching, practicer of constant optimism in life. Such character in everyone can produce the next virtue of the man of God—a self-denying mind-set.

Is Self-Emptying

Self-emptying involves effort (Phil. 1:27); example (Phil. 1:28-30); esteeming others (Phil. 2:1-4); and expressing the mind of Christ (Phil. 2:5-30) by employment of a new mind-set (Phil. 2:5-11) and emulation of faithful brethren (Phil. 2:12-30). There may be no greater challenge for the man of God than to pursue the very humbleness of the Christ (Phil. 2:5).

By Evidencing Humility In Effort And Example

Evidencing humility is an imperative for the man of God. The disciple's very life-style must "*become*" (**axios**, worthily)¹¹ or make "*attractive*" the gospel to others (Phil. 1:27). A man of God is a walking billboard for Christ. Much effort is needed to secure such a manner of life for one must strive or exert energy (**sunathlountes**, from the idea of training an athlete)¹² to remain true to the message even in the face of enemies for God's man is "*given*" (**echaristhee**, "*has been granted*," from **charis**, grace. The Christian has been shown the "*favor*" of being allowed to suffer for Jesus!);¹³ a chance to be persecuted for his faith (Phil. 1:28-30). It is, indeed, a great honor to suffer with Christ.

By Esteeming Others

Not only is a man of God an example of the gospel and one who makes great effort to remain faithful, but he esteems all others better than self (Phil. 2:1-4). Such thinking is not "*low self-esteem*" but "*loving others as one loves self*" (Matt. 22:22-39). And, when the man of God focuses on the needs of others, great unity of love for brethren and great harmony in the church automatically follow (Phil. 2:2-4). Paul used the term **sunpsuchoi** (translated "*one accord*" in the English)¹⁴ which term implies two souls that are "*beating together*."¹⁵ The term is used only here in the New Testament and perhaps the church at Philippi was the only one to whom Paul could give such a challenge. Great churches are made up of men of God whose very souls "*beat together*."

The man of God who makes the effort is always productive of unity and never part of the problem of sowing discord among brethren (Phil. 2:2; cf. Prov. 6:19ff).

The man of God’s unity of thought and feeling choreographs the harmony most necessary in the church of Christ. Many brethren think that they have better methods than God’s and even start “*community*” churches to test their methods in opposition to the pure gospel’s approach of teaching every soul the truth (Mark 16:15-16). Such brethren (?) ask people what they “*need*” and opt to develop churches designed to meet the desires of the worldly-minded.¹⁶ These latter efforts are the direct result of one’s thinking that one is “*higher*” even than God, let alone one’s brother! There is no self-emptying thought in one who deigns that his methods will work better than the plans demanded by God (cf. I Cor. 4:6, 15).

Someone has written a “*Short Course In Human Relations*” that contains the following advice:¹⁷

1. The six most important words: “*I admit I made a mistake.*”
2. The five most important words: “*You did a good job.*”
3. The four most important words: “*What is your opinion.*”
4. The three most important words: “*If you please.*”
5. The two most important words: “*Thank you.*”
6. The one most important word: “*We.*”
7. The least important word: “*I.*”

Certainly esteeming others is a course to pursue for the man of God, but what is the motivation?

Expressing Christ-likeness

“*Let this mind be in you which was also in Christ Jesus*” is Paul’s advice (Phil. 2:5). Expressing Christ-likeness requires the employment of a brand new way of thinking. The man of God must come to realize that

exhalation from God comes through humiliation. Subordination of self is not characteristic of worldly men (Matt. 15:9, 13) but is the precious, common trait of all of God's children. To have the "*mind*" of Christ is to allow oneself to suffer any humiliation for the cause of Christ—even death!

Paul lists six things that Jesus did in order to empty himself and to carry out the will of God. First, the "*Word*" of God did not insist on remaining in heaven (John 1:1), but "*let go*" of His equality with the Father (Phil. 2:6). The Second Person of the Godhead had every essential attribute of Deity while in heaven, but left that divine prerogative behind to serve man. What man of God will ever have to do as much; what man of God can ever do enough?

Second, the Word emptied Himself (Phil. 2:7), but of what did He so do? He did not give up His nature (Heb. 13:8), but did give up the environment of eternal glory (John 17:4). The man of God must learn to sacrifice even hearth and home in order to do God's will.

Third, the Word in a different form from the one He had in heaven, He became a servant (Phil. 2:7). By taking on the limitations of space and time, Jesus proved his humanity as real as His deity and added further proof as the "*Son of man*" by serving rather than being served (Matt. 20:28). The man of God gives and serves as a debtor to his fellow-man (Rom. 1:14).

In the fourth place, Jesus did not come as a phantom being, but as a true man in the "*likeness*" of man (Phil. 2:7). To those who knew Him best, He was a real human, heir to all of man's temptation without yielding to any (I John 1:1; Heb. 4:15). The man of God is not a "*wimp*," but strong, courageous, and a fighter of temptation; he is one who is a real man in a real world,

but he is not of that world (John 15:18-19).

In the fifth place Jesus was obedient to the Father (Phil. 2:8). Such subordination of will is the epitome of the self-emptying life. The phrase translated “*humbled himself*” is **etapeinosen eauton** and indicates a voluntary humility.¹⁸ Bruce notes that “*Only God could find glory in humiliation.*”¹⁹ Only obedient sons can be considered men of God (Heb. 5:8-9).

Sixth, Jesus died a criminal’s death in order to complete His mission (Phil. 2:8). The bottom rung on the ladder from God’s throne to total submission led to His being a condemned criminal on an accursed cross (Heb. 12:4). The man of God fully realizes that any humiliation suffered here has no equal to what Jesus did. Is Jesus’ humiliation not motive enough to empty self and follow Him (Matt. 16:24)? Jesus’ reward, and the man of God’s, was high exaltation (Phil. 2:9). Jesus was lifted above (**huperupose**)²⁰ the state of glory He had before He came! How? He came back to heaven, not only as Deity, but also as a Perfect Man (I Tim. 6:15)! The reward for God’s man is far beyond any affliction imagined here (II Cor. 4:16-18).

Faithful brethren have been able to emulate the mind-set of Christ, at least as far as humanly possible. Two are mentioned in the Philippian letter, Timothy and Epaphroditus (Phil. 2:12-30). Those two, true collaborators had Paul’s same optimistic spirit and humility of mind because all three had learned such an attitude from Christ.

Paul would send Timothy to the church so that the apostle could be “*of good comfort*” (**eupsucho**, cheerful).²¹ Why send Timothy? Because that man of God was “*like minded*” with Paul and would “*naturally*” care for the church (Phil. 2:20). Timothy would go wherever he was

needed to aid the brethren. The term, “*naturally*,” is from **gneesios** and has the sense of genuineness.²² A man of God, like Timothy, is a genuinely cheerful, helpful soul.

Epaphroditus, the preacher at Philippi, had brought support and aid from the church to Paul in prison (Phil. 2:25, 30). However, Epaphroditus nearly died carrying out the mission (Phil. 2:26-27). Yet, this self-emptying man of God did not want his brethren, beloved at Philippi, to know of his illness lest they be overcome with sorrow and when Epaphroditus did learn that the church had heard of his illness, he was “*full of heaviness*” for the congregation. That noble man of God put the feelings of others first even to the extent of ignoring his own health (Phil. 2:27-28). What a contrast from Epaphroditus are those who would “*quit the church*” because someone did not visit them when they were sick. One should visit and be visited, but there can be no such reason as not being visited given by men of God for quitting the Lord. How petty such an excuse to quit becomes when compared to the suffering of Christ or Paul or Timothy or Epaphroditus. The man of God is self-emptying and must be careful to maintain sound doctrine.

Is Sound

In order to be sound in the faith, the man of God will remain aware of the presence and/or probability of the presence of false teachers (Phil. 3:1-2); he will recall his own journey from darkness to light so as not to desire a return (Phil. 3:3-11); and he will reach toward the goal of heaven (Phil. 3:12-21). A man of God is set against error and for truth for there is no other path to heaven (John 17:17).

By Remaining Aware Of False Teachers

The man of God must achieve four goals in order that he not be deceived by false teaching (Phil. 3:1-2). He must, in the first place, recognize his position as being “*in the Lord*.” Second, one “*in the Lord*” will then follow the written things (i.e., scripture) and realize, in the third place, that such activity is “*safe*” (Phil. 3:1). A fourth safeguard against deception from error is for the man of God to recall that he, too, was once deceived.

By Recalling One’s Past

The man of God is the true Israel and does not follow a sinful past devoted to other religious or “*fleshly*” systems (Phil. 3:3). (The term flesh [**sarki**]²³ is used by Paul in a technical sense in his controversy with ancient Judaizing teachers. Bible students recognize this usage by Paul, especially when studying Romans and Galatians. Paul does not have reference to one’s bodily flesh, nor in the use of “*spirit*” to one’s soul; Paul is referencing Judaism as a fleshly system and Christianity as a “*spirit*” system.) One might very well make the application that the nature of false teaching is that it places confidence in “*flesh*,” that is, in its own thinking.

Paul, because he actually knew as much or more about the law of Moses than the Judaizers, could easily recognize their erroneous efforts (Phil. 3:4-6). A man of God, converted from some denominationalism, usually is well-armed against such error and brethren do well who listen to the warnings from such converts.

Paul had been a “*blue-blood*” Jew and knew all of the nuances of Judaism. He was reared in the ancient Babylonian tradition of Hebrewism and had trained as a Pharisee (Phil. 3:5). (This means that his Greek training probably came at some university in his home

town of Tarsus.) He practiced all the rules of the rabbis, achieving the marvelous goal of being blameless according to the law of Moses (Phil. 3:6). Yet, as a man truly devoted to God, when Paul learned the truth he forsook all of his former grand estate in life (counting such as “*dung*”) in order to be righteous before God (Phil. 3:7-8). Men of God care not for earthly titles, academic pursuits, nor worldly honor; but for the resurrection and reward offered by Christ (Phil. 3:9-11). A man of God’s retirement is definitely “*out of this world.*”

By Reaching For Heaven

Men of God are always realistic about their status before God and are ever pushing ahead toward the goal of completeness in heaven (Phil. 3:12-21). Paul, a man of God, viewed his salvation as a race to be won, not one in which he had already triumphed (Phil. 3:12). The beloved apostle of Christ did not believe that once he was saved he was always saved. Such arrogance can have no place in the make up of God’s man.

The goal for Paul was singular (Phil. 3:13). Some wag once wrote of a man without purpose as riding off on a horse in all directions. God’s man must know where he is going. The term apprehended here (**katalephenai**)²⁴ has the sense of laid hold and is so translated in the American Standard Version.²⁵ Paul had not completely grasped his goal and would not until death (cf. II Tim. 4:6-8), but Paul knew where that goal was.

Goethe wrote that “*When all is said and done, the greatest art is to limit and isolate oneself.*”²⁶ Paul also knew that in order to reach his goal of heaven that one thing had to be uppermost in his mind (cf. Col. 3:1-3; Phil. 3:13). So the former things of Paul’s life, including

all earthly achievements and failures, could never be allowed to divert Paul’s attention from his aim because the heavenly goal continually moved ahead as he pressed upward (Phil. 3:14). Heaven is never out of sight, but it is always just ahead for the man of God.

Paul, as a true man of God, desired that all of his beloved brothers and sisters in Christ would have the same singular purpose in life (Phil. 3:15). In order to accomplish such a goal every Christian would have the same walk (**stoichein**, path)²⁷ and rule (**kanon**, canon).²⁸ Paul, as a man of God, would never teach that everyone was trying to go to heaven even though by “*different roads*.” Paul knew only one path and one rule (cf. John 14:6) and therefore, was truly God’s person!

The how of such a walk for the man of God is to follow apostolic teaching and example (Phil. 3:17; Acts 2:42; II Cor. 11:1; I John 4:6; Luke 10:16). The man of God knows how to mark both a good example and a bad one (cf. Rom. 16:17-18). The term, mark (**skopos**) means to notice with the eyes and to follow.²⁹ God’s man keeps his eyes on the proper examples and stays keenly aware of improper ones in order to avoid them (Phil. 3:17). Paul, a true man of God, would weep when thinking of what false teachers could do to his beloved brethren (Phil. 3:18-19).

The man of God who reaches for heaven realizes that therein lies his true citizenship (Phil. 3:20). The true country still awaits God’s children (Heb. 13:14). And, it is from that place that the Master of all men of God will come to fashion anew their present bodies so as to be suitable for a grand entrance into everlasting bliss (Phil. 3:21). A man of God with heaven on his mind has taken the most important step toward a peace that passes all understanding.

Is Serene

Serenity derives from steadfast joy (Phil. 4:1-4); from self-control in helping others (Phil. 4:5); from suppliant prayer (Phil. 4:6-7); from sober mindedness (Phil. 4:8); and from Saviour-centered strength. Surely serenity (peace of mind or true joy) is a worthy and desirable goal for the man of God.

From Steadfast Joy

The Bible attests that thoughts determine life (Matt. 12:34-37; Psm. 19:14; Prov. 23:7; Rom. 12:2; Phil. 4:8). Paul had become a great missionary for Christ by getting his thoughts straight on the law of Moses (Phil. 3:2-3) and on what things should be first (Phil. 3:4-12). Therefore, Paul could have true joy and would challenge others to have the same joy by simply standing fast in Christ (Phil. 4:1). A man of God can stand fast because his citizenship is in heaven (Phil. 3:20); his Master is powerful (Phil. 3:21); and because the man of God will be resurrected (Phil. 3:21). Therefore, steadfastness is not a problem for God's servant, but a by-product of all God has done for His children. Standfast (**steekete**) is a military term used of a soldier who stood firm during the shock of battle (cf. I Cor. 16:13; Eph. 6:12, 14; Col. 4:12; I Thess. 3:8; II Thess. 2:15; I Peter 5:12).³⁰ The man of God will not panic when trial and temptation attack, but will remain serene.

The man of God also finds serenity in the true unity of brothers and sisters (Phil. 4:2). (One wonders what an inspired writer might pen were he to fashion a one-sentence summary of one's present life as Paul wrote here of the lives of these two women!)

Serenity also comes from the true joy of helping others (Phil. 4:3). The "*true yokefellow*" mentioned is not

named, but as a man (or woman) of God a true yokefellow is expected to aid all others for the cause of Christ.

From Self-Control

Serenity comes by and through Christ which joy results in Christian forbearance (Phil. 4:4-5). A moderation (**epieikes**, “*sweet reasonableness*”)³¹ is attained that can be manifested toward all men by God’s true follower (cf. James 3:17; II Tim. 3:3; Acts 24:4; II Cor. 10:1).

From Suppliant Prayer

Serenity for the man of God is directly linked to the quantity and quality of his prayer life (Phil. 4:6-7). There is an imperative here to stop being anxious and to tell God about everything (Phil. 4:6). The story is told of a hitchhiker who was given a ride by a man in a pick-up truck. The hitchhiker had a rather large knapsack strapped to his back. As the truck proceeded down the road, the driver noticed that the hitchhiker, who was in the back of the pick-up for lack of room up front, still had the knapsack on his back. The driver stopped and asked why the hitchhiker had not laid down the knapsack. The rider replied, “*I did not think there was room for me and it.*” Too many pray to God about their troubles, and then like the hitchhiker, carry the troubles away on their backs even though God is willing to carry such for every Christian. There is room for a man of God’s troubles at the throne of God and every man of God learns to leave his afflictions with the Father (Heb. 4:16). Such knowledge is the origin of a life of peace.

From Sober-Mindedness

If ever one needs to be upset or discouraged, all one needs to do is listen to the evening news or hear the world report on itself. Since the “*whole world lieth in wickedness*,” listening to such reports is depressing (I John 5:19). Paul advises that a man of God will think on purer, lovelier, more honest things in order to achieve peace of mind and soul (Phil. 4:8). One’s mind will dwell on something (Psm. 19:14; Isa. 55:7; Mark 7:21; Rom. 12:2; II Cor. 10:5) and if one thinks on a thing long enough and often enough, one will get to the point that one can not stop thinking about it. The man of God can and must control his thoughts or he will be constantly agitated by the world.

The man of God will also achieve the serene life by doing right (Phil. 4:9). He will learn, receive, hear, and see only right things and right ways (Phil. 4:9). When the man of God practices (as a habit) what he has learned is right, the God of peace will be with him! Paul could offer his life as an example of doing right. Man of God, can you?

From standing fast, helping others, prayer, and right-thinking, Paul (a man of God) had learned serenity and contentment (Phil. 4:10-13). Others cared for him (Phil. 4:10). Overcoming life’s trials strengthened him (Phil. 4:11-12). On-going help from Christ reinforced his courage to act (Phil. 4:13).

From Saviour-Centered Strength

Not only was Paul strengthened on every hand, but that man of God realized that there would be continuing support from brethren and abounding supply from God (Phil. 4:14-24). The secret of true serenity is that what is given to God and to one’s fellow man is

returned in an overflow so great no one can measure it (cf. Luke 6:38). Jesus did teach that it is more blessed to give than to receive (Acts 20:35).

Years ago a Christian brother's wife (they had one son) left him for another man. The ex-wife gave birth to two daughters by the new husband. The former Christian husband, treated the two girls as he did his own son and the girls would be his on those weekends he had his son. The man of God was always thinking of things to do for the children. Sadly, on the way home from a store one day, the Christian brother was killed in an automobile accident. Two things found in the car gave comfort to his family. There were grocery sacks containing cookies and candies for the children. (The man of God was a diabetic and would not have purchased such for himself.) And, a blood-spattered Bible open to a bookmarked place: Revelation 21:1-4. The giving and caring man of God had evidently been studying about heaven. To live a caring life here and to enter joy there is all that mattered to God's man.

Conclusion

The man of God places his mind on Christ, in thanksgiving for salvation (Phil. 1). The man of God transforms his mind to the self-emptying attitude of Christ (Phil. 2). The man of God centers his mind on right values and tenets (Phil. 3). The man of God maintains a mind of many virtues (Phil. 4).

How did Paul accomplish so much in one lifetime? Where did Paul “*get his go?*” Paul had a purpose, a hope, a motivation, a certain mind set to be “*all that he could be*” as God's man. May this study of the man of God as seen in the Philippian letter motivate each to the same effort. The man of God's purpose is the upward pull of Christ to God (Phil. 3:13-14).

Endnotes

1 The literary source of this poem is not known. The author had it in his Philippian notes.

2 Wendell Winkler was preaching at a day session of the Mid-South Training for Service Series that used to be held annually in Memphis. Liberalism killed the work.

3 Walter Bauer, **A Greek-English Lexicon Of The New Testament And Other Early Christian Literature**, 2d ed., revised by William F. Arndt, F. Wilbur Gingrich, and Frederick W. Danker (Chicago, IL: University of Chicago Press, 1979), p. 524.

4 *Ibid.*, p. 302.

5 **The Greek New Testament**, 3d. ed., ed. Kurt Aland, Matthew Black, Carlo M. Martini, Bruce M. Mefigger, and Allen Wikgren (London: United Bible Societies, 1975), p. 681.

6 *Ibid.* Some manuscripts have **epainon Christou** here.

7 Bauer, **A Greek-English Lexicon**, p. 821.

8 *Ibid.*, p. 88.

9 *Ibid.*, p. 25.

10 A. T. Robertson, "The Epistles of Paul," in **Word Pictures In The New Testament**, vol. IV (Nashville, TN: Broadman Press, 1931), p. 440.

11 Bauer, **A Greek-English Lexicon**, p. 78.

12 *Ibid.*, p. 21.

13 *Ibid.*, pp. 877-878.

14 Bible references in English in this manuscript are from **The Holy Bible, King James Version** (World Publishers, 1999).

15 Bauer, **A Greek English Lexicon**, pp. 893-894.

16 For example, John Mark Hicks (Harding Graduate School of Religion professor) and Gary Ealy have publicized the new Cordova (Tennessee) Community Church both in hand-outs and Memphis newspaper coverage. Copies of the hand-outs are in the possession of the author.

17 The material came from Robert White who is a faithful elder for the Nettleton Church of Christ in Jonesboro, Arkansas. The author is unknown.

18 Bauer, **A Greek English Lexicon**, pp. 804-805.

- 19 F. F. Bruce, **The Humiliation of Christ** (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker, 1985).
- 20 Bauer, **A Greek English Lexicon**, p. 842.
- 21 Ibid., p. 329.
- 22 Ibid., pp. 162-163.
- 23 Ibid., pp. 743-744.
- 24 Ibid., pp. 412-413.
- 25 **The Holy Bible American Standard Version** (New York: Thomas Nelson and Son, 1929).
- 26 Keith A. Mosher, Sr. “Class Notes on Philippians,” Memphis School of Preaching, 1999.
- 27 Bauer, **A Greek English Lexicon**, pp. 768-769.
- 28 Ibid., p. 403.
- 29 Ibid., pp. 756-757.
- 30 Ibid., pp. 767-768.
- 31 Ibid., p. 292.

Chapter 13

“Walk By The Same Rule” “Mind The Same Thing”

• Philippians 3:16; 2:2; 4:2 •

Dave Miller



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Paul’s letter to the Philippian Christians was penned from prison. Yet the attitude and tone of the letter is one of joy, enthusiasm and exuberant admonition to engage in faithful Christian living. Paul had converted these brethren on his second evangelistic tour (Acts 16). Established and named by Alexander the Great’s father, the city of Philippi enjoyed the special privileges afforded a Roman colony. The church had provided Paul with financial support on two previous occasions (4:16). They sent Epaphroditus with a third gift to aid Paul during his imprisonment. Recovering from a near fatal illness (2:27), Epaphroditus was then sent by Paul with the Philippian letter back to the brethren to allay their fears and thank them for their continued assistance.

The central concept of the book is stated in 1:27 and restated in 4:1. Philippian Christians are exhorted to conduct themselves in a manner that is worthy of the gospel by standing firm for the gospel. They must stand

firm amid suffering (1:29-30). They must stand firm by emulating the humility of Christ (2:1-30). They must stand firm by dealing with the enemies of the cross (3:1-21). In short, they must stand firm in the Lord (4:1). This theme is echoed in various parallel expressions: “*work out your own salvation*” (2:12); “*let us walk by the same rule*” (3:16); “*the things which you learned...these do*” (4:9). Key words in the letter include “*fellowship*” (1:5; 2:1; 3:10; 4:14), “*confident*” (occurring six times—1:6,14,25; 2:24; 3:3-4) and “*joy/rejoice*” (occurring sixteen times—1:4,8,18,25,26; 2:2,17,18,28,29; 3:1; 4:1,4,10). The living of the Christian life by standing firm with confidence must be punctuated and permeated by fellowship and rejoicing in all circumstances of life.

Living the Christian life and engaging in conduct worthy of the gospel naturally entails giving attention to unity. The thematic statement of 1:27 speaks of standing fast with **one** spirit. It enjoins striving *together* for the faith of the gospel with **one** mind. In chapter two, unity is further accentuated in the phrases “*be likeminded,*” “*same love,*” “*of one accord,*” “*of one mind*” (2:2). In chapter three, we’re to “*walk by the same rule*” (3:16). In chapter four, two Christian sisters are admonished to “*be of the same mind in the Lord*” (4:2). What do these pleas for unity mean?

In Philippians, Paul is very passionate in his plea for unity. Unity matters to God! Unity is commanded as much as any other requirement of the gospel! Woe to those through whom disunity and division come if that division is counted by God as unnecessary and inappropriate! Churches of Christ in our day are experiencing two serious challenges to the unity which Paul enjoins.

Challenge #1

The leftist element among us that is attempting to restructure the church of our Lord frequently speaks of the need for unity. What they mean is that we must abandon strict attention to doctrinal correctness in exchange for **togetherness**—acceptance of the “*I’m Okay, You’re Okay*” philosophy. They have confused unity with union. They think if everyone will just accept one another—“*give peace a chance*”—that all will be well and we can achieve a true brotherhood of man.

This obsession with superficial acceptance of one another is analogous to those in Jeremiah’s day who cried, “*Peace, peace!*”—when there was no peace (Jer. 6:14). Jeremiah stressed the fact that genuine peace could be achieved only through compliance with God’s truth, i.e., walking in the old paths where the good way is to be found (Jer. 6:16). Peace comes by being “*valiant for the truth*” (Jer. 9:3).

Jesus made this point abundantly clear when He declared, “*you shall know the truth, and the truth shall make you free*” (John 8:32). Paul said we must “*receive the love of the truth*” (II Thess. 2:10) and participate in “*speaking the truth in love*” (Eph. 4:15). We must recognize that God’s law is truth (Psm. 119:142). Doctrinal agreement must inevitably precede unity. When people refuse to unite on the doctrines that Jesus has issued, then in Jesus’ own words, division and absence of peace are necessitated (Luke 12:51).

Isn’t it incredibly ironic—and terribly tragic—that the very ones who are insisting that we must abandon our emphasis upon doctrine in order to achieve **unity** are most responsible in our day for creating **division** in the body of Christ! Their agenda for change has brought more heartache and disruption to the church of our Lord

than any other movement that has come down the pike in recent history. *“Father, forgive them, for they know not what they do”* (Luke 23:34).

Challenge #2

In a day when the liberal, digressive element in the church clamors for *“unity-in-diversity”* and *“unity at all costs,”* it’s easy for us to move in the opposite direction and lose our sensitivity for biblical unity. Most advocates of unity in our day seek unity without sufficient regard for doctrinal correctness. But let us not allow their error to cause us to lose sight of the unity that is enjoined upon us.

We ought to be very concerned that we have within churches of Christ a radical right element. This element seems to spend a great deal of time and energy finding fault with brethren whose track record of doctrinal conservatism has been amply demonstrated. Rather than face the true foe at this juncture in the history of the church, they viciously turn on men who are dedicated, genuine Christians. These faithful men are placed on a torture rack of interrogation and scrutinized regarding the pet hobbies of their interrogators. Besides the damage they are doing to these innocent victims of their hostility, immaturity and insecurity, they are in direct violation of Bible admonitions to maintain unity.

Look carefully at Paul’s challenge to Philippian Christians in 2:1-4:

If there be therefore any consolation in Christ, if any comfort of love, if any fellowship of the Spirit, if any bowels and mercies, Fulfil ye my joy, that ye be likeminded, having the same love, being of one accord, of one mind. Let nothing be done through strife or vainglory; but in lowliness of mind let each esteem other

better than themselves. Look not every man on his own things, but every man also on the things of others.

The construction used in this verse, known as “*condition of reality*,” means that the conditional clauses are already in effect. In other words, Paul is calling attention to what these Christians enjoy as a present reality. As fellow Christians, they share together consolation in Christ, comfort of love, fellowship of the Spirit, tender mercies and compassions. What a tremendous description of what you and I as faithful Christians ought to be experiencing together!

Paul’s point is that since we Christians share these wonderful blessings together simply because we’re Christians, in view of these great realities that we enjoy ***together***—we ought to be united! We ought to be of the same mind! We ought to be of one accord! But look at the division in our day that exists among doctrinally conservative brethren! Talk about biting and devouring one another (Gal. 5:15)!

I suggest to you that at least two critical factors are lacking in this scenario. First, some of the issues over which we choose to fight each other do not deserve the attention we give them. They certainly do not merit the disunity and hostility that is generated! How dare us create hysteria, suspicion and an air of condemnation over the issue of translations! Certainly, we ought to study the various versions and teach brethren the weaknesses and errors—but we have no right to condemn and reject faithful brothers and sisters in Christ based on their use of a translation *when their belief and practice is in harmony with God’s Word!*

How dare we attack and badmouth a brother over some fine point of the indwelling of the Holy Spirit when

that brother has always taught and continues to teach that Pentecostal and Calvinistic views of the Holy Spirit are unbiblical! The brethren who do these things are so wreckless that they print up all of the gory details of their angry assault upon their brother and then send that material all over the brotherhood to try to draw us into their worthless war and their ruthless ranting. The very ones who have convinced themselves that such conduct makes them courageous and faithful defenders of Christ’s cause are the very ones who are, in actuality, in direct violation of Paul’s admonitions for unity among Christians!

Secondly, those who create disunity among conservative brethren apparently have no grasp of exactly what New Testament insistence upon unity even means. They know what it does *not* mean, but they haven’t conceptualized how the doctrine of unity is to manifest itself in actual conduct. They do not seem to know how to apply the biblical doctrine of unity to *themselves*! They feel perfectly justified and righteous when they cut, slash, demean and launch their missiles of cruelty against their brother without any regard for his salvation. Then they think it appropriate to broadcast their mudslinging all over the brotherhood to discourage and dampen the spirits of everybody else.

A speaker at a lectureship a few years ago made the statement that we ought to deal with liberals the way his father dealt with unwanted litters of cats and dogs on the farm. He said his father would put them in a gunny sack and either drown them or knock them in the head with a club. Right thinking people who hear such caustic, abrasive, unkind remarks recognize that such an attitude is sinful—and hiding behind a smokescreen of doctrinal conservatism will not excuse it!

God wants us to be united on all doctrines that matter, i.e., that affect salvation. He does not want us to be at odds with one another over matters of opinion or trivial matters that do not jeopardize one's eternal status. He intends for the church of Christ to be a haven of security, warmth, encouragement and assistance in withstanding the temptations of life. If we are constantly eyeing one another with suspicion as to whether each is still dotting all his "I's" and crossing all his "T's," the church will never possess the healthy atmosphere that God intended in order to promote the cause of Christ.

Why does this circumstance exist among us? Why do we have brethren who create unnecessary division? In the very verses where Paul enjoins unity, he identifies perhaps the number one hindrance to unity: selfishness! Listen to 2:3:

Let nothing be done through selfish ambition or conceit, but in lowliness of mind let each esteem others better than himself. Let each of you look out not only for his own interests, but also for the interests of others.

Brethren, Paul is saying that one of the reasons why we attack other people unnecessarily is because we are self-centered, egotistical and wish to advance ourselves. Is it even possible that some brethren are spending their time splitting hairs and generating so much controversy over so little substance because they are wanting to make a name for themselves? Is that possible?

Is it even remotely possible that the works of the flesh are operative here? What about Galatians 5:20 which speaks of "*hatred, contentions, jealousies, outbursts of wrath, selfish ambitions, dissensions*"? Do these attributes exist among any of us? Is it possible that our claim to

be solely concerned with doctrinal correctness is a pretense and that we are actually in the grip of the works of the flesh? The Pharisees presented themselves as sound, conservative and strictly interested in defending the spiritual status quo. Did that impress Jesus? Did He not see through their cover and lay bare the fact that while doctrinal strictness is required by God, their alleged commitment to doctrinal conservatism was, in fact, a pretense and a sham. Jesus did not excuse their ulterior motives even though they kept up a front of doctrinal soundness. He, in fact, condemned them as lost!

Brethren, let us truly *“walk by the same rule.”* Let us genuinely be *“like-minded, having the same love, being of one accord, of one mind.”* May God bless us with the ability to achieve unity—in doctrine and in attitude.

Chapter 14

“Be Perfect” (Mature) “Have The Mind Of Christ”

Dave Miller



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In the Philippian letter, Paul repeatedly refers to the mind—having the same mind, being like-minded, of one mind, in lowliness of mind, let this mind be in you, have this mind (2:2,3,5; 3:15). This emphasis upon attitude, mindset and perspective reaches a lofty pinnacle in chapter two where he describes the mind of Christ. There he summarizes the humility that typified Jesus—and which ought to characterize us.

In view of the wonderful blessings of comfort and encouragement available to Christians (2:1), Paul insists that we Christians ought to eliminate petty quarrels and jealousies and work together in harmony (2:2). This attitude is achieved by reshaping our thinking patterns to see one another differently. I must respect you and esteem you better than me and you must view me and respect me as better than you (2:3). I must show concern for your well-being and the matters that concern you and

you must show concern for my well-being and the matters that concern me (2:4).

These admonitions are astounding! They are radical and life-changing! They require a complete transformation and renewing of the mind (Rom. 12:2). Christians are to view people with a whole new perspective that differs from the way most people view their fellow human beings. This stipulation is so expansive and far-reaching in its intended application that it would seem few people ever attain to this truly selfless, self-effacing, self-sacrificing mentality.

No where is this mindset displayed more fully and clearly than in the example of Jesus Himself:

Have this mind in you, which was also in Christ Jesus: who, existing in the form of God, counted not the being on an equality with God a thing to be grasped, but emptied Himself, taking the form of a servant, being made in the likeness of men; and being found in fashion as a man, he humbled himself, becoming obedient even unto point of death, yea, the death of the cross (2:5-8, ASV).

This passage pinpoints precisely the meaning of maturity.¹ Christian maturity at its core is the condition in which an individual puts others before himself. If the number one responsibility of humans is to love God and fellowman (Deut. 6:5; Lev. 19:18; Eccl. 12:13; Matt. 22:37), then the central feature of Christianity is to see to the well-being of other people—our neighbors (Matt. 7:12; Luke 10:25-37; cf., Matt. 25:31-40; James 1:27).

When we face up to this critical concept, the conduct of Jesus while He was on this planet makes more sense. No wonder He was able to mingle and socialize with what most would label the “*riff-raff*” of society! No wonder

He was able to spend quality time with those who were considered to be the spiritual dregs and lower elements of His day. He was able to love people and consider them deserving of care and attention—even if their spiritual and physical condition was repulsive. He was able to set Himself aside and consider others better than Himself. What a Supreme Example!

Do you mean to tell me that **God** could lower Himself enough to become a human in the first place and then in the second place to place Himself **beneath** other humans? That He could so humble Himself that He considered Himself to be a **Servant** of humanity—in life and in death (Mark 10:45).²

Jesus declared:

For who is greater, he who sits at the table, or he who serves? Is it not he who sits at the table? Yet I am among you as the One who serves (Luke 22:27).

After lowering Himself to wash the dirty feet of the disciples, He posed the penetrating query:

If I then, your Lord and Teacher, have washed your feet, you also ought to wash one another's feet (John 13:14).

Luke repeatedly demonstrates this central attribute of our Lord.³ In Luke chapter seven, we are presented with the occasion in which Jesus was invited to the home of a Pharisee for a meal. When a woman, whose sinful reputation was known all over town, appeared and began manifesting her contrition, her humility, and her love, the Pharisee was sickened by her display and disturbed that Jesus would receive that kind of attention from such a woman. The response of Jesus showed the Pharisee's attitude to be wrong. Simon considered himself

to be better than the woman. Jesus made it clear that he wasn't. Not only was he not spiritually superior to her, his attitude was rotten and prideful. Jesus, in essence, said to him,

Your lack of love and compassion is reflected in the fact that you don't think you have very much to be forgiven of; so you won't be forgiven of very much (cf., Luke 7:47).

In Luke chapter fifteen, tax collectors and sinners came into the presence of Jesus to hear Him and, in the process, apparently shared a meal with Him. Again, the Pharisees felt this familiarity was a violation of the biblical doctrine of fellowship. Yet, Jesus did not agree. He related three parables about a lost sheep, a lost coin, and a lost boy to press a central point: God is interested in all people and those who cannot humble themselves to be equally concerned are like the angry older brother who was ultimately in worse shape than the prodigal. He was in a life and death struggle with his own haughty spirit.

In Luke chapter eighteen, Jesus called attention to two men who went up to the temple to pray. You remember the Pharisee was pleased with his comparative spiritual condition while the tax collector admitted his abject spiritual poverty (cf., Matt. 5:3). The tax collector's ability to humble himself before God meant He would be exalted (Luke 18:14). Jesus made those comments because some were present who *“trusted in themselves that they were righteous, and despised others”* (Luke 18:9).

Brethren, we are to strive with all of our being to be righteous and obedient. But we must never think we have achieved a self-sufficient spiritual condition.

So likewise you, when you have done all those things which you are commanded, say, “We are

unprofitable servants. We have done what was our duty to do” (Luke 17:10).

But we are all like an unclean thing, And all our righteousnesses are like filthy rags (Isaiah 64:6).

The ultimate manifestation of Christ’s humility and lowliness in behalf of human beings was seen in His death. Isaiah anticipated this feature:

Who has believed our report? And to whom has the arm of the Lord been revealed? For He shall grow up before Him as a tender plant, and as a root out of dry ground. He has no form or comeliness; and when we see Him, there is no beauty that we should desire Him. He is despised and rejected by men, a man of sorrows and acquainted with grief. And we hid, as it were, our faces from Him; He was despised, and we did not esteem Him. Surely He has borne our griefs and carried our sorrows; yet we esteemed Him stricken, smitten by God, and afflicted. But He was wounded for our transgressions, He was bruised for our iniquities; the chastisement for our peace was upon Him, and by His stripes we are healed. All we like sheep have gone astray; we have turned, every one, to his own way; and the Lord has laid on Him the iniquity of us all (Isaiah 53:1-6).

Notice that the sacrifice of Jesus is represented as a self-imposed humiliation in behalf of human beings. The cross was God relegating Himself to a demeaned status at the hands of mere humans. The Son of God willingly subjected Himself to treatment that is only dished out to the lowest of the low! He did not deserve the treatment He received. We did!

Listen to David’s description:

But I am a worm, and no man; a reproach of men, and despised of the people. All those who see Me laugh Me to scorn; they shoot out the lip, they shake the head, saying, “He trusted in the Lord, let Him rescue Him; Let Him deliver Him, since He delights in Him!” ...For dogs have surrounded Me; the assembly of the wicked has enclosed Me. They pierced My hands and My feet; I can count all my bones. They look and stare at me. They divide My garments among them, and for My clothing they cast lots (Psalm 22:6-8,16-18).

Paul brought this same point to the forefront when he said:

For when we were still without strength, in due time Christ died for the ungodly. For scarcely for a righteous man will one die; yet perhaps for a good man someone would even dare to die. But God demonstrates His own love toward us, in that while we were still sinners, Christ died for us (Rom. 5:6-8).

All of these passages illustrate the meaning of Philippians chapter two. Paul claims that Jesus was fully divine—co-equal and co-eternal with God. Yet Jesus, of His own free will, relinquished His exalted position and clothed Himself with the limitations of human flesh. As if this action were not enough, Paul additionally declares that Jesus went even further by taking the form of a **servant**.⁴ Again we see that the mind of Christ which Christians are admonished to possess means placing ourselves beneath others.

Paul then says that Jesus “*humbled Himself and became obedient*” (2:8). Do you not find this fact to be mind-boggling? That God is not prideful? If anyone has

a right to be arrogant and pleased with Himself, surely it is God! Yet God is humble! Jesus is the epitome of humility. God and Christ are totally unselfish. So where do we get off thinking we're somebody? How dare we think we are better than anyone else—regardless of their condition! If divinity is humble, how dare we be otherwise!

Paul notes that the ultimate manifestation of divine humility is the cross (2:8). This same point was made by the writer of Hebrews: "*Though He was a Son, yet He learned obedience by the things which He suffered*" (Heb. 5:8). The divine status that Jesus enjoyed did not prevent Him from subjecting Himself to the discipline, suffering and submission on the behalf of people. Humility produces obedience. Humility generates action undertaken in service of other people.

For you know the grace of our Lord Jesus Christ, that though He was rich, yet for your sakes He became poor, that you through His poverty might become rich (II Cor. 8:9).

These observations from Scripture underscore the fact that unity is only possible within the local congregation when members mature in their ability to be consistently humble. Like Jesus, we must "*empty*" ourselves, i.e., subordinate our will to the will of the Father. We must refrain from taking matters into our own hands and asserting our own will. We must continually seek to please God by acting according to His will in our treatment of others.

How significant it is that the central feature of Christianity—the death, burial and resurrection of Christ (I Cor. 15:3-4)—was an act of humility, unselfishness and selfless love. That is the heart of Bible religion! That is what Christian living is all about! That is what God, Himself, is all about—God is love (I John 4:8). We

do not love, we are not mature, we do not have the mind of Christ if we do not empty ourselves and become servants to other people and consider other people better than ourselves.

My stubborn will at last hath yielded;
I would be Thine and Thine alone;
And this the prayer my lips are bringing,
“Lord, let in me Thy will be done.”

—C.H. Morris

O, the bitter pain and sorrow
That a time could ever be,
When I proudly said to Jesus,
“All of self, and none of Thee.”

Higher than the highest heavens,
Deeper than the deepest sea,
Lord, Thy love at last has conquered,
“None of self, and all of Thee.”

—Theodore Monod

Endnotes

1 The word “perfect” in our King James Bibles comes from a Greek word that means “whole, complete, full-grown, mature—not sinless. See the use of the term in Philippians 3:15 and compare to the word “spiritual” in Galatians 6:1.

2 Mark 10:45 is the thematic statement of the book of Mark, written to a Roman audience to convince them that service—not power—is what life is about.

3 Whereas Mark stresses the servanthood of Jesus, Luke (the only nonJewish writer of the New Testament) accentuates the humanity of Jesus. Notice, then, that of the four gospel writers, Mark and Luke illustrate the meaning of Philippians 2:1-8 by spotlighting the actions of Jesus that demonstrated His humility (cf., “humiliation”—Acts 8:33; Isaiah 53:8).

4 The word for “servant” in this verse is *doulos* which means “slave.” All other references to Jesus as a servant in the New Testament employ a different word (*pais*).

Chapter 15

Paul's Gains And Losses: His Value System

• Philippians 3:7-11 •

James W. Boyd



James' parents were Bowling and Louise Boyd; born April 15, 1930 ~ Reared in Donelson, TN ~ Attended David Lipscomb College; Vanderbilt University; Alabama Christian School of Religion ~ Began preaching in 1952 ~ Local work in Indiana, Tennessee, Alabama, Mississippi ~ Married Rosalyn Hale ~ Four children; nine grandchildren ~ Presently at the East End church in McMinnville, TN (since July, 1985).

Our text is Phillipians 3:7-11, a passage where Paul, guided by the Holy Spirit, speaks of his gains and losses in a comparative manner. This record provokes several very important questions and gives answers to them. By making reference to the life and experiences of Paul, the Holy Spirit teaches us what is of greatest value, what our priorities should be, what really matters in life, whether or not being a Christian is worthwhile, what costs are to be considered to be a Christian, how we must consider all things pertaining to this life relative to our service to God and the life that is beyond this one. Just what is true gain and how should we look at the cost of following Christ? We would not be amiss to consider this inspired passage as Paul's balance sheet of profit and loss.

The Spirit Speaks

But what things were gain to me, those I counted loss for Christ. Yea doubtless, and I

count all things but loss for the excellency of the knowledge of Christ Jesus my Lord: for whom I have suffered the loss of all things, and do count them but dung that I may win Christ, and be found in him, not having mine own righteousness, which is of the law, but that which is through the faith of Christ, the righteousness which is of God by faith: that I may know him, and the power of his resurrection, and the fellowship of his sufferings, being made conformable unto his death; if by any means I might attain unto the resurrection of the dead.

It is very important that we have our priorities in order. I recall an elder in a congregation where I preached who nearly always included in his prayers that we might keep our priorities in proper order. How many times we have heard that we must put first things first?

We Are Taught What Must Be First

We remember the conversation of Jesus with the man who would follow Him but wanted to bury his father first. Jesus said, “*Follow me and let the dead bury the dead*” (Matt. 8:22). In no way was Jesus teaching disrespect for parents or neglect of duty toward them. It was an opportunity to teach what is more important, what is first, the same lesson Paul had learned and reports in our text.

When Paul was telling of the liberality of the churches of Macedonia he said the reason they gave as they did was they “*first gave of their own selves to the Lord*” (II Cor. 8:5). When a person has given himself to the Lord he finds no difficulty in being generous in giving of those things over which he has stewardship because he put first things first.

Men are to be appointed deacons only after they have first proved themselves (I Tim. 3:10). I cite these accounts to show how Scripture teaches us to learn what comes first, what is of value, what matters. This is what we learn from our text also.

It is well that we ask ourselves at this point, even before we learn from Paul, what is of greatest value to us? There are so many matters that impose themselves into our lives. There are many people with whom we have involvement. There are so many attractions for us and goals held out that provoke our ambitions. Should we not evaluate all things the way God does? Has He not revealed in His Word what He considers most important?

Jesus taught,

For what shall it profit a man if he gain the whole world and lose his own soul? Or what shall a man give in exchange for his soul? (Mark 8:36-37).

Again He taught,

Take heed and beware of covetousness: for a man's life consisteth not in the abundance of the things which he possesseth (Luke 12:15).

Solomon had taught somewhat along our line of study when he wrote, "*Let us hear the conclusion of the whole matter: Fear God, and keep his commandments: for this is the whole duty of man*" (Eccl. 12:13). The Holy Spirit had him to write those words after he had indulged himself in every pursuit of happiness and satisfaction that the things of this world have to offer. He found them all but vanity, and rightly determined that service to God is what really counts.

That we understand these things is important to

Christ. He said, *“He that loveth father or mother more than me is not worthy of me: and he that loveth son or daughter more than me is not worthy of me”* (Matt. 10:37). In no way can it be thought that the Lord is teaching us to withhold love from those who are so near and dear to us. But this is another of His words that teach us what our text is teaching. What is of greatest value and what should be first with us? In His sermon on the unnamed mount He said, *“But seek ye first the kingdom of God and his righteousness...”* (Matt. 6:33). Priorities and proper values matter to the Lord, and so it must be with us.

Jesus Taught Our Lesson In Parables

Those who study the teaching of Jesus know that He often used parables to reveal the truth. It is almost as if Jesus had Paul and his life in mind when He taught the parable of the man finding a treasure in the field, and realizing the value of what he had found, went and sold all that he had so he could purchase the field and lay hold on the treasure (Matt. 13:44). Similarly, He told of a merchant who sought goodly pearls. The merchant found one pearl of great price, and, seeing how it was worth more than all others, sold all he had so he could purchase the great pearl (Matt. 13:45-46). This is what occurred in the life of Paul, and should occur in my life and yours. There is that which is worth more than anything and everything else for which we should seek to obtain. Nothing else matters unless we lay hold of that which is of greatest value.

Is it not true that we make mistakes regarding what counts? Our health is so important. Should we dissipate it in activities that would destroy or impair it? Are not spiritual and eternal matters of greater concern

than material and temporal matters? Is it not the failing of many as they pursue those things which cannot last and neglect to lay hold on that which will? What did John say about the things of this world when compared to the things concerning the will of God?

Love not the world, neither the things that are in the world. If any man love the world, the love of the Father is not in him. For all that is in the world, the lust of the flesh, the lust of the eyes, and the pride of life, is not of the Father, but is of the world. And the world passeth away, and the things thereof; but he that doeth the will of God abideth forever (I John 2:15-17).

As Paul Saw Matters

Paul considered those things that could be counted as gain for him to be loss for Christ. He was willing to suffer the loss of his gains in order to have what was far more important. He looked upon his worldly advantages as disadvantages and hindrances to possessing the treasures and riches that are found in Christ. Therefore, he gladly suffered "*the loss of all things,*" and counted them but dung, refuse, waste, for the benefits he could have in Christ.

In a true sense, Paul presents a dual picture of himself: one was of himself before he came to Christ, and the second as he was after he had come to Christ. What a contrast in the two conditions! It is like his words to the Ephesian church after he listed what they had been "*in times past*" and compared it to what they now were once they had been "*quicken*" and "*raised up*" by the Lord (Eph. 2:1-6). He wrote to the Corinthians reminding them of a host of sins of which they had once been guilty,

but then stated, “...*but ye are washed, but ye are sanctified, but ye are justified in the name of the Lord, and by the Spirit of our God*” (I Cor. 6:11). There is such a difference in one’s spiritual state before and after coming to Christ. This difference can only be realized when one understands and then acts obediently toward God in realizing what is of the greatest value and what should be our goal and aim. Our text teaches us these things.

Even as Paul wrote he was in prison for the sake of Christ. He had learned so many times, and firsthand, that there are many who do not appreciate what it is to be a Christian and actually have hatred for those who choose to follow Him. He noted in First Corinthians eleven the many sufferings he had endured. It had been told to Ananias, who taught Paul, that he would suffer many things for the name of Christ (Acts 9:16). His conversion brought upon him the enmity of former friends. He was accused of blasphemy simply because he preached what the prophets had foretold. He was considered a traitor worthy of death, and suffered plots and attempts of assassination.

But his disposition toward such things was simply that it was worth what he had gained in Christ. He considered his suffering to have contributed to the boldness of others in standing for truth and had “*fallen out rather to the furtherance of the gospel*” (Phil. 1:12,14). Whatever he had been called upon to suffer, he considered it well worth the blessings he had received. He did not consider what had happened to him as a penalty, but as privilege. He was undaunted by the costs he had been required to pay. By suffering he was helping to carry the cross. After all, this is that which the Lord calls upon us all to do? “*If any man will come after me, let him deny himself, and take up his cross daily, and follow me*” (Luke

9:23). The cross of this passage does not refer to the trials and hardships of life that are common to man, but the cost of being a Christ in a world that is so saturated with the works of the devil. Christians often have the same hardships, illnesses, difficulties, disappointments and related things as other people. This is because the Christian is still living in the world as are all others. But he also carries extra trials for the sake of the Christ who is his Savior.

Paul Had “Counted”

The word “*counted*” is in the perfect tense, suggesting a process that had been completed in past time and was having a present result. Paul had always sought the right relationship with God even when he was a leader in Judaism and was persecuting Christians. He always acted “*in all good conscience before God*” (Acts 23:1). When he asserted that truth before the Jewish council even then he was smitten on the mouth by one who presented himself as a high priest. He made the same claim before Felix in face of the accusations being made against him by his Jewish enemies who once had been his friends (Acts 24:16). The conclusion he had drawn regarding his losses and gains were not simply an emotional reaction nor a “*knee-jerk*” response. It came after a life of service, devotion, success, and suffering. Neither is there any element of uncertainty in what he concludes. What he is teaching is that which he is absolutely confident. He had been convinced when he was converted of that which was of greatest value and the passing events of the years had only made his conviction stronger, more resolute, and determined. That conviction had not dimmed, but had grown brighter and more pronounced. Without learning and having what is

of greatest value, nothing else in life is of any ultimate value at all. This is what our text teaches us.

What “Things?”

When Paul speaks of “*things*” that he counted but loss, he had reference to the rank, position, and power he once held among the Jews. Paul had “*profited in the Jews’ religion above many my equals in mine own nation*” (Gal. 1:14). He had gained honor and respect largely due to his zeal for the traditions of his fathers. He acted upon his convictions more than others. He had been highly educated in the ways of the Jews, sitting at the feet of one of the most august teachers among them, Gamaliel, right in the city of Jerusalem that was the center of the entire Jewish economy and faith (Acts 22:3). It is not difficult to see how this brought him prestige, knowledge, and advantage far above what others might have possessed. All these, however, he gladly sacrificed. They became as nothing to him.

Paul had a deep and rich religious heritage, a bloodline that would be the envy of others. He had been circumcised the eighth day as was commanded, being a Hebrew of the Hebrews, of the seed of Abraham, no mixture of Gentile blood in his ancestry, and of the tribe that produced the first royalty in Israel, the tribe of Benjamin of which King Saul had come. This was the tribe that remained loyal alongside Judah when the nation divided. None found occasion in his former manner of life among the Jews to lay blame against him (Phil. 3:4-6). He was a Pharisee and the son of a Pharisee (Acts 23:6). The position of Paul as Saul of Tarsus could be the envy of all other Jews because he was on a high level that others did not have the right to claim. It is no small thing for one to leave the religion of his fathers, his

religious party in which he had been aggressive and active, and turn from an illustrious ancestry. But all that became nothing to him. Not only had he turned away from all those things, but if there was anything else which he must sacrifice he was willing to do that as well (Phil. 1:11). He tells us the reason he counted such things as loss, and tells us of the gains he made when he came to Christ.

To Whom The Glory Belonged

Before considering what Paul counted as gain, we should understand that Paul did not think he had achieved these things because of his own works alone. It was not because of his *“own righteousness.”* He did not gain his new advantages by the old law. It was *“through the faith of Christ.”* It was by the *“righteousness which is of God by faith.”* All the glory and credit for his gain belonged to God. His gains had been given to him when he gave up his previous allegiance for Judaism and looked to Christ. He knew all too well that his profit had not come of himself, nor by a life under the old law, but by following in the faith of Christ.

What Paul Considered as Gain

What did Paul count as his gains? In our text he begins his list with being *“found in him,”* with reference to being found in Christ.

There is therefore now no condemnation to them which are in Christ, who walk not after the flesh but after the Spirit (Rom. 8:1).

Salvation is in Christ (II Tim. 2:10). All spiritual blessings are in Christ (Eph. 1:3). There are blessing for those who *“die in the Lord”* (Rev. 14:3). Being *“in Christ”* was important to Paul because he realized these benefits were

of true value. He did not have these things before he came to Christ. Now he had this gain.

His gain was that he had come to “*know*” Christ. This is not to merely know about Him, but to have that personal, intimate unity with Him with Christ as His Redeemer, Savior, companion, protector, provider, mediator, intercessor, teacher, guide, example, and Lord and Master. Nobody can successfully live life, nor enjoy what God offers, except through His Son (John 14:6; Acts 4:12). Paul had come to recognize this truth. What can this world offer that could be of more value than this relationship with Christ?

Paul, being highly educated, knew the value of knowledge. In Christ he had the excellent knowledge of Christ. He could enjoy the benefits of His resurrection, and be the recipient of the eternal life that a risen Lord could provide. Knowing that this life is but a relatively short span of our existence, he wanted to be resurrected from the dead to an eternal glory. Paul wanted his eternity with God and only in Christ could this be his future.

The Costs May Seem Heavy But See The Gains

There is a cost to being a Christian. This world is not compatible with the high standards of Christ. Those who choose the more excellent way of the Lord are tempted to ask, “*Does it pay in this life to be a Christian?*” We cannot escape noticing how many who have chosen the evil ways of the world seemingly prosper and enjoy life. We do not see them suffering as Christians are often called upon to suffer. They seem to have everything one could desire in this life and the Christian may endure deprivation, alienation, and a multitude of other difficulties. This inequality of conditions is what

sometimes brings to the surface the question of the value of being a Christian.

But this has been the question that has faced God's people down through the ages of history. The prophets wrote about it and showed how the way of God is ultimately the right way. While it may appear at times that evil prevails, we can know from the promise of God that good will ultimately be victorious, and that victory belongs to those who are in Christ.

Consider for a moment the blessings we enjoy that those who do not yet know the Lord do not have. Though we have sinned, we are the recipients of His mercy and pardon. We have been forgiven by being washed clean by the shed blood of Christ on Calvary. This was God's way of providing satisfactory payment, as God saw it, for our transgression. Christ gave His life, and we have life abundantly, here and in the hereafter.

What would we exchange for the privilege of prayer, and approaching the throne of God, knowing all the while that God, in all His might, majesty and power, will hear our prayer and answer our prayer according as He sees what is best for us? Can the world provide such assurance and security?

What in this life is equal to the hope of eternal life that we have in Christ? How would you measure having fellowship with Deity here and now, and with the saved of the earth? One has written,

If but two things I could keep; and could retain
no other; I'd want the friendship of my Lord;
and then my Christian brother.

As Christians, we travel the road of life alongside the very best people on earth, God's people, His spiritual family, the church. In spite of failings and shortcomings, the Christians around us are far better than anything

this world has to offer.

You cannot find anything of this world as valuable as knowing the promise of I Corinthians 10:13,

There hath no temptation taken you but as is common to man: but God is faithful, who will not suffer you to be tempted above that ye are able; but will with the temptation also make a way to escape, that ye may be able to bear it.

To paraphrase this promise is to remind us that there is nothing that shall happen this day that God and I together cannot handle. Though doubtless easier to say than to live, this is a truth and blessing God gives to His people. Who would give that away for this world?

We bask in the warmth and brilliance of His assurances, “*And who is he that will harm you, if ye be followers of that which is good*” (I Peter 3:13). “*If God be for us, who can be against us?*” (Rom. 8:31). “*The Lord is my helper; I will not fear what man shall do unto me*” (Heb. 13:6).

We even have God’s promise that He will provide for us our physical needs if we will but seek His kingdom and righteousness first (Matt. 6:33). God knows our needs even better than we know them. We do not pray in order to tell God what we need. He already knows. We pray because by prayer we acknowledge that we are dependent on Him for our daily bread, and all other necessities of life. We know the source of our bounty. Psalm 37:25, “*I have been young, and now am old, yet I have not seen the righteous forsaken, nor his seed begging bread.*”

How can you put a measure on the presence of our Lord to be with us when we cross the valley of death? We shall not have to cross Jordan alone. We are never alone in this life, nor shall we be alone in death. God’s

own Son will be with us every step of the way.

While the world longs for contentment, freedom from fear, and peace of mind, we enjoy these things as Christians. Furthermore, we have peace with God because of the reconciliation with Him made possible by Christ who is our peace (Eph. 2:13-17). Can there be any doubt that being a Christian is worth whatever it takes for us to be one? Paul had no doubt about it. This is what the Holy Spirit, through Paul, teaches us in our text. While we may not have the wealth, fame, power, prestige, acceptance, and glory of this world, what of that? How do those things compare with what we have in Christ? They pale into relative insignificance and worthlessness.

What Of Our Balance Sheet Of Profit And Loss?

Knowing what is of value, shall we evaluate matters as God teaches us to do? Shall we get and keep our priorities in order? Shall we seek first things first? Will we not count the glory of being "*in Christ*" above all else? This is a personal and individual decision that each must make. How thankful we surely must be that we can lay hold of that which is eternal gain, and "*be found in him.*"

Chapter 16

The Joy Of Christianity

• Philippians •

Johnny Ramsey



A native of Sherman, Texas • Graduate of Abilene Christian College • Johnny has been preaching for 50 years, living in Australia for three of those years • He has held almost 1000 gospel meetings in 43 states and 17 countries • Brother Ramsey is the author of 10 books, 25 tracts and over 1,000 printed articles • Married to Iris Baker • They have four children and nine grandchildren.

Back in 1920, a new record of 805,000 immigrants from all over the world poured into the United States. Since the founding of our nation, citizens of all other countries have looked longingly to the day they could come to America, the land of freedom and opportunity. They could realize the value of being an American.

We all desire to place our talents, energies and abilities in worth-while endeavors. No man, in his right mind, wants to engage in unprofitable activities. I wish to affirm that the most valuable way of life is the Christian life. Yes, the most profitable way that we can spend our sojourn here below is to become a Christian, live as a Christian—and die with the hope of a Christian.

It is true that some question the value of being a Christian. They believe in the doctrine of the Epicurians (Acts 17; Luke 12) “*eat, drink and be merry—for tomorrow we die.*” Hence, they see no value in the

principles of Christianity. Other men, who pose as brilliant scholars, cannot or do not humble themselves to embrace the simple truths of the Christian life. I honestly believe that all mankind would give New Testament Christianity more serious consideration if they were constantly reminded of **The Value Of Being A Christian**. Therefore, we present this lesson.

Why should a man want to be a Christian? First of all, because a Christian is one who has been saved from past sins. Just think of it—all the burden of guilt is removed from a persons past life when he becomes a Christian. And, if he continues to walk uprightly, he can be saved eternally one day. We read in Acts 2:41-47 that those who obeyed the Gospel on the day of Pentecost were saved from past sins and added to the church. In Ephesians 5:23, we read that Christ is the Saviour of the church. Therefore, it follows that since a Christian is a member of the church, and Christ will save the church—that a Christian is a saved individual, as long as he lives faithfully in the church of the Lord. This is one value of being a Christian. Secondly, we should desire to be a Christian because that would mean that we are children of God. Just think of it—a child of a King. In writing to Christians, Paul stated: *“The Spirit itself beareth witness with our spirit, that we are the children of God”* (Rom. 8:16) and the beloved John exclaimed: *“Behold, what manner of love the Father hath bestowed upon us that we should be called the sons of God.”* In writing to the young Timothy, Paul likens the church to the family or household of God. Notice the reading of I Timothy 3:15:

But if I tarry long, that thou mayest know how thou oughtest to behave thyself in the house of God, which is the church of the living God, the pillar and ground of the truth.

Those of us, who claim to be Christians, should ponder well the expression— “...*that thou mayest know how thou oughtest to behave thyself in the house of God...*” Yes, as children of the King, we must realize there are things we cannot do that the children of the world engage in— and there are things we must do in service to our Master that are not required of other children. Why? Because we are members of a Royal Family (I Peter 2:9) and must conduct ourselves properly.

Next, we should realize that only as Christians can we glorify God. In a stirring passage, Peter tells us to glorify the name of Jehovah by wearing the name Christian (I Peter 4:16). Christ Himself told disciples of the Lord to,

Let your light so shine before men, that they
may see your good works, and glorify your
Father which is in heaven (Matt. 5:16).

Certainly we can understand how valuable it is to be a Christian—for a Christian glorifies God!

Another tremendous asset of the Christian is the fact that he has the highest moral standard and the most far-reaching influence on earth. In the Sermon on the Mount we are reminded by Jesus of the higher code of living that characterizes a child of God. In II Corinthians 5:17 we read that when a person becomes a Christian, “*old things are passed away—all things become new.*” We are, as God’s elect, to “...*seek those things which are above...*” (Col. 3:1-3) and to “*Love not the world...*” (I John 2:15). If we truly live as Christians should, our influence will be a grand commentary on Christianity. Our lives, as God’s children, should be the best sermon ever preached. But are they? Do we conduct our lives in such a way that when we cross over the river of death our influence for good will continue to

live on? In Hebrews 11:4 we read of Abel, a righteous man of God, who “...*being dead yet speaketh.*” The poet said:

Lives of great men all remind us,
We can make our lives sublime,
And in departing leave behind us,
Footprints on the sands of time.

The footprints of a Christian are found following the footsteps of Jesus—thus exhibiting the highest moral standard known to man. To a young infidel who was scoffing at Christianity because of the misconduct of its professors, the late Dr. Mason said: “*Did you ever know an uproar to be made because an infidel went astray from the paths of morality?*” The infidel admitted that he had not. “*Then, don’t you see,*” said Dr. Mason, “*that by expecting the professors of Christianity to be holy, you admit it to be a holy religion, and thus pay it the highest compliment in your power?*” The young man was silent. As Christians, we must realize the serious responsibility that is ours—that is, exalting Christ in our daily life. In speaking of the Christian, someone has well written:

We are the only Bible the careless world will read,
We are the sinner’s gospel, we are the scoffer’s creed,
We are the Lord’s last message
Given in word and deed
What if the line is crooked
What if the type is blurred?

Indeed, Christ has no hands but ours to do His work today!

Yes, we must remember that,

...we cannot be channels of blessings if our lives are not free from all sin. We will barriers be and a hindrance to those we are trying to win.

Let us cleanse ourselves of all defilement (II Cor. 7:1).

Possibly the greatest advantage of the Christian's life is his optimistic approach toward death. Yes, the child of God does not fear the chilly tide of death, but he can say calmly, *“Yea, though I walk through the valley of the shadow of death, I will fear no evil: for thou art with me...”* (Psm. 23:4). Of the Christian, John wrote: *“...Blessed are the dead which die in the Lord...”* (Rev. 14:13) and the Apostle Paul stated, *“For to me to live is Christ, and to die is gain”* (Phil. 1:21).

Contrariwise, I have heard of Oscar Levant, a famous pianist of the last decade who was so afraid of death he would not allow the word to be spoken in his presence. The only explanation for the Christian's attitude toward death is the fact that he has hope after death of the greatest joy and contentment. Paul was inspired to say:

For we know that if our earthly house of this tabernacle were dissolved, we have a building of God, an house not made with hands, eternal in the heavens (II Cor. 5:1).

In explaining the faithful life of Abraham the writer of Hebrews stated: *“For he looked for a city which hath foundations, whose builder and maker is God”* (Heb. 11:10). To the loyal follower of the Lord, Jesus Himself has said:

Let not your heart be troubled: ye believe in God, believe also in me. In my Father's house are many mansions: if it were not so, I would have told you. I go to prepare a place for you. And if I go and prepare a place for you, I will come again, and receive you unto myself; that where I am, there ye may be also (John 14:1-3).

This is the hope of a Christian. The unbeliever has nothing to lean upon.

From a selfish stand-point we should want to be Christians—because “...*all things work together for good...*” to those who are disciples of Christ (Rom. 8:28). Yes, it is valuable to be a Christian in this life. To those who diligently put the kingdom first, God has promised food, clothing and shelter (Matt. 6:33). The Psalmist David exclaimed:

I have been young, and now am old; yet have
I not seen the righteous forsaken, nor his seed
begging bread (Psm. 37:25).

The Hebrew writer tells us that the Heavenly Father will “...*never leave thee, nor forsake thee*” if we give our lives in His service (Heb. 13:5). We hear the commentators speak a lot about security these days. Friends, the greatest security is that of a Christian. As a Christian, I can hold to God’s unchanging hand in a world of insecurity and turmoil. In Romans 8:35, 38-39 the apostle Paul, inspired by the Holy Spirit, gave us these comforting and challenging words.

Who shall separate us from the love of Christ?
shall tribulation, or distress, or persecution,
or famine, or nakedness, or peril, or sword?

Now notice his answer:

For I am persuaded, that neither death, nor
life, nor angels, nor principalities, nor powers,
nor things present, nor things to come, Nor
height, nor depth, nor any other creature, shall
be able to separate us from the love of God,
which is in Christ Jesus our Lord.

Such precious promises as these should make us all see the value of being a Christian.

Now that we have discussed the value of Christianity, it is only proper that we give what the Bible teaches concerning who is a Christian and how to become one. There are many erroneous concepts concerning this important question. Let us see what God’s word teaches on the subject.

First we learn in Acts 11:26 who a Christian is. That passage states: “...*And the disciples were called Christians first in Antioch.*” Webster’s Dictionary has this to say about the word disciple:

Through the influence of its Biblical sense (disciple) has ceased to be an exact synonym for pupil or scholar; it always implies personal adherence to the views of one’s master or teacher.

This view is certainly borne out by the words of Christ as recorded in John 8:31: “...*If ye continue in my word, then are ye my disciples indeed.*” In John 15:8 we hear Christ as He speaks again concerning His disciples: “*Herein is my Father glorified, that ye bear much fruit; so shall ye be my disciples.*” Thus far, we have learned that a Christian is a disciple, and a disciple is one who continues in the Word of the Lord and bears much fruit as a follower of Christ. But, how do we become a Christian? In John 15:4, Jesus said,

Abide in me, and I in you. As the branch cannot bear fruit of itself, except it abide in the vine; no more can ye, except ye abide in me.

So a disciple or Christian is one that bears fruit for Christ because he abides in Christ. But, before we can abide in Christ we must be in Christ. Paul tells us in Galatians 3:27 that we are baptized into Christ.

Therefore, we conclude that a Christian is a disciple of Christ—one that has heard the Word of the Lord, believed it and obeyed it, culminating his obedience by being buried with His Lord in baptism (Col. 2:12). Then, as a Christian, he abides in Christ, and bears much fruit for the Master's cause. Are you a Christian? You cannot afford to pass up the values of a life with Christ.

What It Means To Follow Jesus

The most rewarding life is Christianity. It truly pays to serve Jesus—now and eternally. The challenge of loyalty before God is exacting and exciting. To follow the shepherd “...whithersoever he goeth...” (Rev. 14:4) will take us into many demanding regions and even the shadow of death. But, to those who bring even their thoughts into captivity unto Christ (II Cor. 10:5) it is a journey that always eventuates in triumph (II Cor. 2:14). As the song writer aptly stated: “*The toils of the road will seem nothing when we get to the end of the way.*” Serving the Lord means self-denial (Luke 9:23), a pilgrim journey in a foreign land (I Peter 2:11), a devotion that never looks back to yesterday (Luke 9:62) and the sacrifice of all that mundane interests hold dear (Luke 14:33). In fact, children of God dare not even love family ties and the bonds of kinship to the extent of hindering full allegiance to the Lord (Matt. 10:37; Mark 3:35). However, in view of such unstinting devotion we have a Redeemer who shall never leave us nor forsake us (Heb. 13:5-6) and a promise of abundant blessings now and forever (Luke 18:30).

A closer walk with God often brings earthly rebuffs and human reprisals. Paul learned that lesson vividly. Nonetheless he gladly counted past achievements as worthless in order to gain Christ (Phil. 3:4-9). Stephen gave his life for a cause deeper than physical existence

(Acts 7:60). James and John learned the lesson of walking hand in hand with the Master in the tribulation that attends the Kingdom (Rev. 1:9). Some saints in the early days of Christianity were willing to be burned at the stake or sawn asunder rather than deny the Lord that bought them. Their fidelity, even in the face of death (Rev. 2:10), is a tribute to the rich, glorious and eternal joys of devotion and duty. God’s tomorrow shall certainly be brighter than today! As Jesus cogently affirmed, so we earnestly believe: *“Great is your reward in heaven.”* In spite of having the sentence of death to contend with daily (I Cor. 15:30; II Cor. 1:9), Christians of the first century looked forward to the glory yet to be revealed (I Peter 4:13).

In the ten point outline which follows we learn of the blessings awaiting those who serve the Savior. Following Jesus means:

1. **We Surrender—Yet Win The Battle**
(Rom. 12:1-2; James 4:7-10; II Peter 1:11).
2. **We Are Humbled—Yet Always Victorious**
(II Cor. 2:14; Luke 14:11; I John 5:4).
3. **We Die Daily—Yet Live Abundantly**
(II Cor. 5:1; John 10:10; Eph. 3:20).
4. **We Long For Heaven—Yet Live Better Lives On Earth**
(Phil. 3:20; Rev. 14:13; Jude 21).
5. **We Are Crucified With Christ—Yet, We Never Die!**
(Gal. 2:20; John 11:25-26; Eph. 2:6).
6. **Buried With Christ—But Walk In New Life**
(Col. 2:12; Rom. 8:1-2; Eph. 4:20-24).
7. **Past Sins Forgiven—Yet, Pressing Onward**
(Acts 3:19; Heb. 8:12; Heb. 6:1).

8. **Sojourners On Earth—But Mansions Waiting In Heaven**

(I Peter 2:11; Heb. 11:10-13; 9:24).

9. **Content With Blessings—Never Satisfied With Attainments**

(Phil. 4:11; Rom. 8:31; Psm. 116:12; Rev. 3:21).

10. **Deep In Debt—Yet, Free In Christ**

(Rom. 1:14; 13:8; Psm. 46:1; John 8:36; Gal 5:1).

Surely, all of these attendant joys of Christian service encourage a spontaneous response of devotion in our hearts. Indeed, the love of Christ compels us to loyalty and total commitment (II Cor. 5:14).

It is likewise important to realize what following Jesus does not mean. Some people have fallen easy prey to the Devil due to a misconception on this subject. When we follow Christ it does not mean we will have no difficulties. It simply means God will supply, by His grace, sufficient strength to meet the problems (II Cor. 12:9; I Peter 5:7). To be a servant of the Lord does not mean we are perfect. But the Savior does provide us an avenue of cleansing and encouragement (I John 1:7-2:2). This gives us incentive to press on to higher ground and a closer walk with God (Psm. 27:4). To be a disciple of the Master does not mean that Satan forgets us. To the contrary, he diligently seeks to devour us through cunning devices (I Peter 5:8; II Cor. 2:11). Only by steadfast faith and resolute conviction can we withstand such power from “*the deceiver of the whole world*” (Eph. 6:10-12; Rev. 12:9). Serving Jesus does not produce unhappiness either. To the contrary “*...happy is that people, whose God is the LORD*” (Psm. 144:15). They can sing praises to the Father from a prison cell at midnight (Acts 16:25). Such songs in the night bespeak a devotion and joy unfathomed by the world. Even overt

persecution produces rejoicing (James 1:2). Following Christ does not mean wealth and ease. In fact, one gets an entirely new set of values as he walks the road of righteousness with the Redeemer. The unsearchable riches of the Lord (Eph. 3:8) tower high above the fleeting vanities of earth. Knowing that this land is not our home we gladly serve in view of our heavenly citizenship (Heb. 6:19-20). Conversely, the sincere follower of the Lord fully understands that he does not wait for heaven as the only reward of devotion. This life becomes more meaningful with every passing scene because God gives us perfect peace (Isa. 26:3) and access to the throne of grace that supplies mercy in every time of need (Heb. 4:16).

The Psalmist gives us a tremendous thought that captures the serene blessings of following Christ: “*Thou shalt guide me with thy counsel, and afterward receive me to glory*” (Psm. 73:24).

The song writer, J. R. Baxter, was thinking along this line when he wrote:

I hold to the hand that is steadfast and sure,
No other foundation is ever secure,
I look for the home that will ever endure:
I hold to the hand of my Lord.

I hold to the hand of my Savior and King.
‘Till safe in that city where angels now sing;
He leads me so gently where still waters flow,
And tells me of heaven, where I long to go.

Blessing In Christ

The most vivid contrast I can find in the Bible is that of Christ’s words to Laodicea (Rev. 3:15-16) and Paul’s sublime writing in the eighth chapter of Romans. It is manifestly true that the lukewarm Laodiceans had

everything but the Lord. That tragic truth becomes even sadder when one realizes they were heirs to all spiritual blessings. Living beneath their privileges caused them to be spiritually blind, miserable, naked and wretched. To the contrary, Romans 8 tells us that in the fullness of Christ there can be found no desolation, hesitation, separation, exasperation, condemnation or desperation!

It is true, of course, that externally, persecution and oppression can come to the Christian. But, to the loyal follower of Jesus such things “...*move us not...*” (Acts 20:24). In fact, I Peter 1:7-9 indicates that these matters actually draw us nearer to the Lord of Glory,

That the trial of your faith, being much more precious than of gold that perisheth, though it be tried with fire, might be found unto praise and honour and glory at the appearing of Jesus Christ: Whom having not seen, ye love; in whom, though now ye see him not, yet believing, ye rejoice with joy unspeakable and full of glory: Receiving the end of your faith, even the salvation of your souls.

Is it any wonder that the inspired apostle thus wrote in Romans 8:18:

For I reckon that the sufferings of this present time are not worthy to be compared with the glory which shall be revealed in us.

Truly, the gem of the grand treatise known as Romans—if not indeed the choice section of the entire Bible is Romans, chapter eight. Sublime, profound, spiritual, stirring, sweet, inspirational, enthralling, captivating—all these descriptive terms, and more, set forth the beauty, scope and grandeur of this provocative section of Holy Writ.

This passage begins with the phrase “*In Christ*”

Jesus” and ends with the same expression. In between these opening and closing verses one can find at least 13 specific blessings which belong to all those who are faithfully serving the Redeemer. We can now understand better Isaiah’s enthusiasm for the coming Messiah as found in Isaiah 25:9:

And it shall be said in that day, Lo, this is our God; we have waited for him, and he will save us: this is the LORD; we have waited for him, we will be glad and rejoice in his salvation.

Let us now give notice to the privileges, joys and blessings found for Christians in Romans 8:

1. No Condemnation.
2. Freedom.
3. Life and peace.
4. Christ in us.
5. Glorious resurrection anticipated.
6. Being led by the spirit.
7. Children of God.
8. Joint-heirs with Christ.
9. Help in prayer.
10. All things for our good.
11. Conformation to Christ’s Image.
12. Nothing to separate us from the Lord.
13. We are more than conquerors.

Such grand and glorious benefits ought to make us fully aware of the rich heritage that belongs to the disciples of the Galilean. As we contemplate the abundant joys of the religion our Lord made possible we must exclaim with the song writer:

I stand amazed in the presence of Jesus the Nazarene and wonder how He could love me a sinner, condemned, unclean.

Truly, the love of God cannot be fathomed by us (Rom. 11:33-34) but it can be so deeply appreciated that we will rejoice in the language of the Psalmist: “...*from everlasting to everlasting, thou art God*” (Psm. 90:2).

This great section of God’s Word, in the very heart of the book of Romans, tells us of consecration and dedication on our part, of intercession and salvation on God’s part, and of inspiration, expectation and eager anticipation. These words typify the power-packed nature of the chapter. One of the key words is hope. It would seem that the poet, Phoebe Cary, captured the essential sentiment of this setting in a poem called “*Nearer Home:*”

One sweetly solemn thought
Comes to me o’er and o’er;
I am nearer my home today
Than I ever have been before—

Father, perfect my trust;
Let my spirit feel in death,
That her feet are firmly set
On the rock of a living faith!

As Romans 8 rushes to its graphic, swelling close, one cannot keep back the exuberant spirit of gratitude for the Lord of Glory. Truly the way of the cross leads home and the Christ of that cross, in His compelling love, will grant us the victory. For, “...*he that is in us is greater than he that is in them...*” (I John 4:4) and “...*this is the victory that overcometh the world, even our faith*” (I John 5:4). Christ Jesus, in His resplendent beauty, and the power of a righteous faith form an unbeatable combination. We are more than conquerors through Him who loves us!

Christ will me His aid afford,
Never to fall, Never to fall.

While I find my precious Lord
Sweeter than all, sweeter than all.

Jesus is now, and ever will be,
Sweeter than all the world to me,
Since I heard His loving call,
Sweeter than all, sweeter than all.

Let the book of Revelation have the last say—the Son of Man has passed through the clouds unto the Ancient of Days and now a great multitude extols His powerful presence:

...Worthy is the Lamb that was slain to receive power, and riches, and wisdom, and strength, and honour, and glory, and blessing (Rev. 5:12).

When nothing can separate us from such a Savior Divine we are truly more than Conquerors!

Chapter 17

“Rejoice In The Lord” “Rejoice In The Day Of Christ”

• Philippians 4:4; 2:16; 3:1 •

Brandon Britton

Brandon graduates from the Memphis School of Preaching in June (1999) • He will begin his full-time work with the East Hill congregation in Pulaski, TN upon graduation (where his parents and grandparents attend) • He has preached at numerous congregations in several states • Brandon and Jade have two sons (Reese, age 4, and Kase, age 1).



To say it is an honor and a delight to be a part of this lectureship would be an understatement. I am thankful that I can call East Hill my home. I led my first public prayer, I read the Scriptures in the assembly for the first time, and preached my first sermon all from this pulpit. My wife, Jade, and I were both baptized in this building, as was my mother. I was privileged to grow up under the spiritual guidance of these godly elders, and the late brother Bill Hart, whom I still esteem as one of the finest Christian men I have ever known. I have so much love and respect for this congregation and also for Paul Sain. I still consider Paul to be “*my preacher.*” He was one of the key motivators in my deciding to preach the Gospel and he has remained a loyal and true friend, as well as being a person to whom I can turn for advice. Likewise, I have the utmost respect for the very active deacons here, many of whom do things

for the church that are not seen by men because they do it to the glory of God. My family and friends are members here and this congregation will always have a special place in my heart.

Introduction

We live in a time and a world full of sorrows and sin. I seldom watch the evening news or read the newspaper because it usually leaves me feeling sad. It is rare that a day goes by in which I do not hear of a child being abused, a woman being raped, a father being killed in a car jacking, or some other tragedy destroying lives. If we focus on things below instead of things above (Col. 3:2), then there is more than an abundance of misery to take away our joy.

Even within the church there are various problems that can dampen our spirits. The growing number of false teachers, the lack of love for the Word of God, the denominational influences and the divisions that are plaguing the body of Christ are enough to break the heart of anyone who loves the church. The expressions of love and appreciation and unity that flow from the pen of Paul to the church at Philippi are a breath of fresh air to the Lord’s church at a time when strife and meaningless agendas are dividing the church of our Lord. The need to get back to the plain and simple old Jerusalem Gospel is long overdue and a study of Philippians can help to remind us that unity in the Lord gives us a cause to rejoice.

Of all the New Testament epistles, Philippians may be the one best suited for promoting joy in the lives of Christians. To the Galatians Paul emphasizes the Gospel. To the Ephesians his main focus was the body of Christ. To the Colossians he stressed the head of the church. In Philippians his subject was the joy that results from the

perfect joining together of the head and body in the Gospel. For the Christian it should be difficult to read this book and not be uplifted by the words of Paul as he proclaims, “*Rejoice in the Lord always: and again I say, Rejoice*” (Phil. 4:4). About sixteen times in these four chapters the Philippians are told to rejoice or have joy and many times the author is speaking of his joy and rejoicing.

Of all the people who inhabit this world, Christians should be the ones who find a reason to rejoice. To the man who serves God faithfully there is a reason to rejoice in both the peaks and valleys of life. Two of the greatest threats to the Lord’s people are pride and discouragement. Discouragement has caused countless men to quit preaching, ended mission efforts, and has driven multitudes from the Lord. The danger of discouragement is real and must be met with the admonition to rejoice in the Lord. The book of Philippians is the ideal section of the Bible to combat all forms of discouragement in the Christian’s life. I am thankful Paul assigned me this section on rejoicing in the Lord and it is my prayer that all Christians will spend time considering the things for which they have to rejoice. As members of the church of Christ we truly have reason to “*Rejoice evermore*” (I Thess. 5:16).

I. Paul Had Reasons To Rejoice

The apostle Paul was one of those rare people who was a born leader and his greatest quality of leadership was his leading by example. In fact his Christian living could be used, “*...for a pattern to them which should hereafter believe on him to life everlasting*” (I Tim. 1:16). He told those at Corinth and Philippi to be followers of him (I Cor. 4:16; 11:1; Phil. 3:17). The word translated

followers is also defined imitators or mimics, with the idea being to do the exact same things Paul did in being a Christian. Even the words that he spoke could be used as a pattern for others to follow (II Tim. 1:13; 2:2). People could follow his example in the way he conducted himself, his attitude, and what he said and go to heaven. He admonished Timothy to live his life in this manner as well (I Tim. 4:12-16). The question now arises, could the same be said of us? Could someone follow our example in how we conduct ourselves, our example in attitude, and our example in what we say and still go to heaven? If they cannot, neither can we.

If Paul was going to tell the Philippians to rejoice, then it would be necessary for him to show them, by example, that he had reason to rejoice. Because Paul was a good leader, he would never ask others to do what he would not do himself. Mixed in with his admonitions for them to rejoice were his own reasons for rejoicing.

A. Paul Rejoiced In Their Faithfulness

Paul begins by explaining to his brethren that it is a joy for him to pray for them (1:4). He appreciated this congregation and was thankful for it, so it was a joy for him to express these strong emotions. He had enjoyed continuous fellowship with them, in the Gospel, from the day they were converted to the time he wrote this letter, and that was a great joy to him. Two other ideas are expressed in this statement. (1) It was a joy to pray for them because his prayer was not out of sorrow for their sins and concern for the condition of their souls (as with Galatia and Corinth). He was not praying for brethren who had left the church or were living in sin, but for faithful Christians. I would much rather be able to pray for God to continue to bless a brother than to be praying for him because he is in sin. (2) To Paul, praying

for fellow Christians was a joy and not a burden. Praying for others was something he wanted to do and not something he did only out of obligation. It can help us in our daily walk with Christ if we remember that serving Christ is a privilege and not a duty.

Further, Paul had great joy in knowing the church at Philippi was united. They were standing firm with the same attitude, the same way of thinking, and working together to accomplish the same goal (1:27). It is obvious from his choice of words that Paul found no joy through so-called “*unity in diversity*.” The Holy Spirit was very specific in having Paul tell them to be like-minded, have the same love, be of one accord and of one mind and NOT just to put aside their differences for the sake of “*getting along*” (2:2). In the case of Euodias and Syntyche, the apostle pleads with them, not to maintain unity at all costs, even if it means sacrificing the truth, but to “*...be of the same mind in the Lord*” (4:2). When Israel, by her actions, demonstrated that she was not in harmony/unity with God’s commands, God did not say they should simply put aside their differences, but rather He asked, “*Can two walk together, except they be agreed*” (Amos 3:3)? This of course was a rhetorical question that the Lord answers by His pronouncement of punishment on them. God demanded unity among His people in the Old Testament and in the New Testament, now, and forever. He demanded unity among His people and that they be unified in Him and according to His will. Paul’s joyous sentiments on unity in Philippians are similar to David’s when he wrote, “*Behold, how good and how pleasant it is for brethren to dwell together in unity*” (Psm. 133:1).

Paul could rejoice in anticipation of the joy that would come by seeing these brethren in heaven. Paul’s

joy would come in knowing that his preaching the Gospel to those in Philippi brought forth faithful Christians. He would rejoice when he saw these brethren standing in Christ at the judgment where he would know that his labor was not in vain (2:16). If those whom Paul converted fell away and were lost again, he could still go to heaven, yet he would suffer a great loss (I Cor. 3:12-15). He would rejoice in the day of Christ if they remained faithful, but it would greatly grieve him to see those whom he loved, for whom he had suffered great persecution, be lost eternally. As with any Christian who loves the souls of men, Paul wanted the saved to remain saved. In the two previous verses he tells them how to keep his work with them from being done in vain: do not be a complainer or troublemaker, be blameless, harmless, without blemish, shine as a light in the world, and hold forth the word of life (2:14-16). We have all suffered the tragedy of learning that a dear brother or sister in Christ has left the Lord and we can relate to the pain that Paul seeks to avoid.

B. Paul Rejoiced In The Spiritual Over The Physical

Despite physical persecution, Paul was able to rejoice and wanted the Philippians to do the same because he knew it glorified God and was beneficial to the church. Yes, Paul had suffered physically. Yes, he wrote this letter from prison, but his attitude was one of joy. The Roman government could chain and shackle his body and cast it into a dungeon, but they could not shut his mouth, stop his pen, nor keep his heart from looking to God in heaven. Since his eyes were focused on Christ, he was able to write,

But I would ye should understand, brethren,
that the things which happened unto me have

fallen out rather unto the furtherance of the gospel (Phil. 1:12).

Paul did not grieve over his imprisonment because it served as a catalyst to the spreading of the Gospel. There is no doubt that some were afraid to speak out for Christ because of the persecution that would ensue. Paul says many of these who were once afraid are now confidently and boldly preaching the Word without fear (1:14). Many of these brethren, probably, saw that Paul preached the Gospel publicly without fear and that God took care of him, thus motivating them to do the same. The Lord told His followers not to be afraid of those who could take their lives but were unable to kill their souls (Matt. 10:28). One of the many joys we have as Christians is the assurance of knowing that even if we must die for the Lord, He will keep our souls with Him. How could Paul remain so joyous in such a miserable condition? His focus was on the spiritual and not on the physical.

The faithful apostle rejoiced in Christ Jesus and had no confidence in the flesh (3:3). If anyone could take pride in physical things, especially concerning Judaism, it was Paul (3:4). Paul was a Benjamite, a Pharisee who kept the law blamelessly, a zealous Hebrew of the Hebrews (3:5-6). Despite all of his accolades and impressive pedigree, Paul rejoiced in Christ and not these physical things. His love for Christ was such that he was willing to give up everything for Jesus Christ. In fact, he considered everything that he gave up nothing more than trash (3:8). Paul rejoiced despite giving up everything the world considered valuable, because his joy was in spiritual things and not physical. Sadly, some members of the church get more upset about their cable going out than they do about their best friend, neighbor, mother, co-worker, stranger, or anyone going to hell. If

you say something negative about the president they will defend him to the death, but they will not utter a sound when the precious church of Christ, for which He shed His blood and died, is slandered and mocked. Many will argue vehemently with friends that their favorite football team is the best, even to the point where they stop speaking for a time, yet they will not disagree with their denominational beliefs for fear of offending them. How many Christians spend as much on a trip to watch a race (buying tickets, souvenirs, food, gas, hotel rooms) as they give to the Lord in an entire year? Too many will drive across a state to see Mark McGwire hit a home run but will not drive across town on Sunday night to hear the Gospel and worship God.

I recently heard one brother say the church needed to be reminded that everything that is tied to this earth will be burned up with it (I Peter 3:10). Let me add to that all the members of the church whose joy is in the physical and not the spiritual (Matt. 6:19-24).

Paul learned to rejoice in any condition. He could find joy in poverty or in prosperity (4:11-12). The reason Paul could be content in any situation was because he rejoiced in spiritual things and not physical. We sometimes esteem Paul very highly and see him as a wonderful example of Christianity, and we should. However, it can help us if we keep in mind that as great as he was, he was just a man. Paul got sick, tired, sad, discouraged, afraid, and just like you and me he sinned. How can knowing this help me? I get sick, tired, sad, discouraged and afraid just like the great apostle Paul; so I can also rejoice in the Lord always like the great apostle Paul. If he can do it, I can do it, and if I can do it, any Christian can do it. There is one stipulation to being able to rejoice in the Lord always, and that is, we must rejoice in spiritual things over the physical.

C. Paul Rejoiced In Having Fellow Laborers

Another thing for which Paul rejoiced was the preaching of Christ. He said he rejoiced in the preaching of Christ and would continue to do so (1:18). Although he was a Holy Spirit guided preacher that had all truth, he loved to hear men preach the Gospel. What truly converted Christian does not rejoice in hearing a Gospel sermon? Far too many of our brethren not only do not rejoice in the preaching of Christ, but they dread and hate it. Every congregation is plagued with those who “*endure*” the Sunday morning sermon and may even make the great and noble sacrifice of suffering through the evening sermon as well (I say this sarcastically). Perhaps I am just naive and should not have been so shaken by this event, but I was. Less than a year ago, I preached a two part sermon on what the Bible says about the church. Among other things (prophecies, nature, conditions for entrance), I said there is only one church (Matt. 16:18; Eph. 1:22-23; 4:4), that ALL the saved are in it (Acts 2:47), that it is not a denomination, and that there are NO faithful Christians in ANY denominations. Much to my surprise and dismay, an elder and his wife rebuked me sharply in the foyer about what I preached. In fact, they told me they did not like that sermon, they were fed up with preachers condemning everybody to hell, and that I would regret preaching that sermon when I matured as a preacher. Friends, these people HATED the preaching of Christ. Anyone who hates the preaching of Christ and the things concerning Jesus and His kingdom, hates Christ. You cannot preach Christ without preaching His church/kingdom (Acts 28:23, 31). The polar opposite of these individuals is Paul who, not only looked forward to hearing the Word proclaimed, but rejoiced in it. I am afraid he could not rejoice in much of the preaching in

the church today.

Having Timothy as a fellow laborer was another thing for which Paul had to rejoice. He could rejoice because he had full confidence in Timothy’s dedication to Christ (2:19-23). Paul and Timothy had served together in the Gospel and the apostle knew what type of man Timothy was and that he could count on him. What a joy it must have been for Paul to have a fellow preacher that he could fully trust to stand for the truth, even in his absence. As a Christian and a preacher it gives me great joy when I can have this same confidence in my elders, but it is a terrible heartache when I cannot. I would imagine sound elders feel the same way about preachers. If every elder, deacon, Christian, and preacher sought to be a person in whom others could trust to be faithful, many of the hindrances to our rejoicing would be removed.

Paul gives thanks and expresses joy for several others who were fellow laborers with him. Epaphroditus was described as his brother, companion in labor, and fellow soldier (3:25). Clement and several women are mentioned as being “...*fellowlabourers, whose names are in the book of life*” (Phil. 4:3). What a joy it would be to serve with other faithful Christians in this life and to enjoy the eternal reward with them in the next life. No doubt, Paul was an extremely busy man who would greatly appreciate having help in his work in the kingdom. We are all thankful for help with our labors, but there is also great joy in being one who will help others who are working for the Lord. I do not know of a single elder who would not rejoice in having someone come to him and say I am wanting to do something for the church, could you put me to work? Just like the old song says, “*there is much to do, there’s work on every hand.*” How joyous it would be if more Christians replied

to the Lord as did Isaiah who said, “...*Here am I; send me*” (Isa. 6:8).

II. Paul Gave Reasons For The Philippians To Rejoice

Along with his own reasons for rejoicing, Paul listed reasons why the Philippians should rejoice. Many of the reasons for which Paul had to rejoice were the same for the Philippians. Since Paul had shown them he could rejoice, even in his bad situation, they were now prepared to count their many blessings. There are many blessings that should cause them to rejoice, but all of them are connected to the two greatest blessings: being in Christ and His second coming for His saints.

A. Rejoice Because You Are In Christ

Six times in these four chapters they are told to rejoice in the Lord (1:26; 2:29; 3:1, 3; 4:4, 10). Paul was not simply telling them who could give them joy, he was also telling them where they had to be to have true joy. The Philippians could rejoice because they were in Christ. Being with Paul, they would have known that all spiritual blessings are in Christ (Eph. 1:3). They would have known that they had been baptized into Christ (Gal. 3:27). The reason they could rejoice was because they were in the place where they could be blessed and rejoice, in Christ. Had they not been in Christ, Paul would not have told them to rejoice in the Lord because they could not have done it. Paul would have told them to get into the place where they could rejoice, get in Christ. Since he was writing to baptized believers, he could tell them to rejoice in the Lord. They were in the place of rejoicing. You must be in the proper place to rejoice.

Consider the people of Noah’s day (Gen. 6-8). As the torrential rains began to pound the land and the flood waters swept away homes, trees, and animals, do you think those people outside the ark were rejoicing? Not only were they not rejoicing, they were crying out for help and mercy. Inside the ark, the right place, there was cause to rejoice, but outside there was only terror.

Put yourself in Egypt during the time of Moses (Exod. 11-12). The Jews were told to kill the lamb and spread the blood on the sides and top of the doorposts (Exod. 12:5-7). They were to do this because the Lord was going to pass through Egypt and all the firstborn would die. However, if the house had the blood on the doorpost the firstborn would not die. Those who were in the houses with blood on the doorposts were able to rejoice when they woke up because their children were alive. Every firstborn child that was not in a house with blood on the doorposts died. Not even the great and powerful Pharaoh was immune to this plague. Inside the blood covered houses there was much rejoicing, but outside of these houses there was no joy, only sorrow. The people had to be in the right place to rejoice.

Many other examples of similar situations could be given, such as Rahab’s house (Josh. 2) and the salvation of those in Jerusalem from the angel of the Lord (II Kings 19). The point of these examples is to show there is no joy for those who are not in the place where they can rejoice. The Philippians were in the Lord and could rejoice because they were in the place of rejoicing. Our friends and family members who are in the Baptist, Methodist, Pentecostal, Catholic churches ARE NOT in the Lord. Since they are not in the place of rejoicing they cannot be comforted by Paul’s words. Anyone, no matter how much we love them, that is not in the Lord has no reason to rejoice. It is our

responsibility to teach them how to get into the place of rejoicing.

B. Rejoice Because He Is Coming For You

The Philippians are reminded that they can rejoice in the coming of the Lord. Paul speaks of the day of the Lord as a joyous day. For the Christian, the second coming of Christ is not a day to fear or dread, it is a day to anticipate with joy. The New Testament is filled with descriptions and reminders about the return of Jesus. The Lord Himself comforted His disciples with these words of His return,

...I go to prepare a place for you. And if I go and prepare a place for you, I will come again, and receive you unto myself; that where I am, there ye may be also (John 14:2-3).

Paul wrote extensively on the subject of the second coming for the purpose of comforting Christians.

For the Lord himself shall descend from heaven with a shout, with the voice of the archangel, and with the trump of God: and the dead in Christ shall rise first: Then we which are alive and remain shall be caught up together with them in the clouds, to meet the Lord in the air: and so shall we ever be with the Lord. Wherefore comfort one another with these words (I Thess. 4:16-18).

What a joy it is to know that Jesus is going to leave heaven a second time for us, only this time He is coming to take us back with Him.

The resurrection that will occur at His return is a reason for Christians to rejoice. In the day of the Lord all the graves will be opened and the dead shall stand again. By His resurrection, Christ became the firstborn

from the dead never to die again. He conquered death when He was resurrected and by His power we will do the same at His coming. On that great day we will come out of the grave and be changed in the twinkling of an eye and be like Him (I Cor. 15:51-52; I John 3:2). Death is the greatest fear that humans have, but for the Christian it is not fearful because we will not stay dead. Our bodies will come out of the grave and be changed to be like His body and then we will go to be with Him forever. If the Bible teaching on the second coming of Christ and the resurrection cannot promote joy in the life of the Christian, absolutely nothing can! What a great day it is going to be when I get to see my Savior face to face for the first time.

III. We Have Reasons To Rejoice In Suffering

As mentioned previously, Paul not only taught that Christians should rejoice in suffering, he showed by example that it could be done. To say that we should rejoice in suffering sounds like an impossible task but it is not. In addition to Paul, Peter and John rejoiced in their persecution for the cause of Christ (Acts 5:41). The fact that many Christians in the past have rejoiced in times of great suffering is proof that it can be done.

Recently I read a disturbing article in the Memphis newspaper, **Commercial Appeal**. Two Memphis juveniles were arrested and charged with attempted murder when they shot and robbed a young mother. The boys knocked on the door and when the mother opened it they shot her in the chest and robbed her apartment. All of this took place while her three children (none of which are above the age of five) stood by. The boys said they did it to prove their manhood and show their worthiness to be in this gang. I sat horrified as I

read this woman's description of what happened. But what she said at the close of the article was more amazing. Through all of her pain and suffering she concluded by saying "*at least I still have my life and my children.*" I began to think to myself, if this non-Christian is able to find a reason to rejoice in this great tragedy, how much more should the Christian be able to rejoice in the face of adversity.

A. Rejoice Because We Have Help With Our Problems

David wrote,

Cast thy burden upon the LORD, and he shall sustain thee: he shall never suffer the righteous to be moved (Psm. 55:22).

When Jesus was suffering, the first thing He did was to turn to God in prayer. Jeremiah, Elijah, David and Moses are all examples of how God's people can always turn to Him in time of need. No matter how great our problems become we have the assurance that we do not have to face them alone. God said, "*...I will never leave thee, nor forsake thee*" (Heb. 13:5), so that we may say, "*...The Lord is my helper, and I will not fear what man shall do unto me*" (Heb. 13:6). We can all count on the fact that problems will arise in our life, but they will not take away our joy if we keep in mind that we have help with our problems. Moses comforted the children of Israel as they prepared to enter Canaan by reminding them that God had been with them and would be with them as they entered the Promised Land. When Joshua took over for the deceased Moses, God comforted him by telling him that He would be with him everywhere he went. Jesus comforted His apostles before His ascension by telling them He would be with them. God has always given His people a reason to rejoice by telling them He

was with them. How wonderful it is to know that we are not left alone to fend for ourselves.

Not only do we have God to help us with our problems, but we also have our fellow Christians to comfort us. It is our duty as a Christian to bear one another's burdens (Gal. 6:2). There is strength in numbers and that is true spiritually speaking as well. It becomes easier for us to rejoice in times of suffering when we realize we are surrounded by those who will help us with problems.

B. Rejoice Because Our Problems Are Only Temporary

As Christians we can rejoice because our problems are only temporary. James said that our life is but a vapor that appears for a little while and then vanishes away (James 4:14). Sometimes it can seem that our problems will never end, but they always do. No matter how great the problems are facing you, you can rest assured that they will end eventually. Of the many things we cannot carry with us into the next life—our problems from this life. Whether our problems are illness and disease, poverty, fear, sadness, or anything else, they stay on the earth when we depart from it. Instead of enduring our problems for eternity, we will enjoy everlasting life (Matt. 25:26). While our problems may be great and many upon this earth, we can rejoice in knowing that they are only temporary. This cannot be said for the non-Christian. If you are not in Christ your problems are only beginning at death. The greatest problem of all comes upon the non-Christian when he dies, the problem that never ends. Eternal suffering is the problem that is permanent for the unsaved (Matt. 25:46). There is no hope nor reason to rejoice for this person.

C. Rejoice Because We Have Hope Beyond The Grave

All who are in Christ have reason to rejoice because death is not the end. For the Christian death marks the beginning of a life that has no end. It is the start of a life that has no pain or sorrow. We often weep at the death of someone we love, but God's people can rejoice in this suffering. We can rejoice because we know that if we remain faithful we will see that person again. Christians never say goodbye, they only say see you later. Death is only a temporary separation from the ones we love in this world. Whenever you are feeling overwhelmed by the problems of life, imagine what a great reunion it will be in heaven. Think of all the people you love that have already gone to receive their reward and what it will be like when you see them again. Think of how great it will be to never be separated again. Not only will we be with the ones we knew and loved in this life, but we will also be with the Lord. When we are able to put our problems in perspective and consider all the things for which we have to be thankful, it becomes much easier for us to rejoice in the Lord always, even in times of suffering.

Conclusion

If we took just a few minutes to actually count our blessings and write them down, we would quickly fill up many pieces of paper. Perhaps we could all benefit from an occasional "*blessings inventory*" to remind us how many reasons we have to rejoice. It has been my pleasure and benefit to study the topic of Christian rejoicing and I pray that Christians would do likewise. God has blessed us all so much in this world and we cannot even imagine what He has in store for us on the other side. The

reasons Paul and the Philippian church had to rejoice are the same reasons we have today. Since there are a number of congregations represented at this lectureship, I want to pose a relevant question. Could Paul write a letter with this theme to the congregation where we attend? Do we offer financial support to missionaries as did Philippi? Do we pray for them? Are we united as the Lord would have us to be? Are we “*doing something*,” seeking to grow in Christ or are we dead in the water? If we can answer yes to these questions then we can easily rejoice in the Lord. If we answered no to any of these, then there are some serious hindrances to our rejoicing that need to be removed. Rejoice in the Lord always, and again I say rejoice.

Chapter 18

“For To Me To Live Is Christ, And To Die Is Gain”

• Philippians 4:4; 2:16; 3:1 •

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The book of Philippians is one of the most personal letters that was written by the apostle Paul (see 4:1). The Philippian church, established on the second missionary journey of Paul, was a strong congregation. Their strength is seen in a number of ways, one of which is the support the church continued to give Paul despite the little time he spent there. They supported Paul even while they were suffering and being persecuted (cf. Phil. 1:7, 27-30; 2:15; 3:10-11; 4:1). It is no wonder that Paul refers to them as “*brethren dearly beloved and longed for, my joy and crown*” (Phil. 4:1); he in fact boasted of them to other churches (II Cor. 8:1ff). Consequently, the book of Philippians becomes a unique treasure of sacred literature with each line becoming an important study in itself.

In the greeting of the book (1:1-2), one sees that the church at Philippi was a fully organized congregation, as

can be seen by the way Paul addressed them, “*To all the saints. . .with the bishops and deacons*” (v. 1). The bishops were elders and were the overseers of the flock (Acts 20:17, 28; I Tim. 3:1-8; Titus 1:5-9; I Peter 5:1-3). The deacons, of course, refer to a special group of servants in the church (I Tim. 3:8-10). Paul thanks God for the Philippian Christians and prays for them with joy. “*Joy*” is the keynote of this book. Paul presents a number of aspects that tell of his fondness for them, as well as the close relationship that they share (1:3-11). For instance, he is thankful for them (v. 3), and he continually prays for them (v. 4). He says that such memories of them are a source of joy to him (v. 4); this is due to the fellowship that Paul and the church have sustained (v. 5). The Philippians had fellowship with him in spreading the gospel. It had always been a church with an evangelistic spirit. He expresses confidence in them (v. 6); he describes them as partners together (vs. 7-8); his desire is that they continue to grow (vs. 9-10) and that they will be filled with the fruits of righteousness (v. 11). One can easily see the tenderness and warmth as Paul writes about Philippi.

Paul then begins to discuss himself as an apostle and the experiences he has had as a prisoner (vs. 12-19). He relates the fact that these things have turned out unto “*the furtherance of the Gospel*” (v. 12). Here, he is, in reality, telling the Philippians how his afflictions have worked for him in spreading the gospel. He faithfully preaches the gospel regardless of the circumstances (vs. 12-14). Paul had the opportunity to teach a number of Roman soldiers. The fact of Paul’s preaching had become well known, as the “*whole Praetorian Guard*” had become aware of Paul and the cause of Christ. Another fact that has arisen from this Roman imprisonment is the fact that other Christians in Rome have become bolder in

their proclamation of the gospel. Some, Paul admits, were preaching Christ out of envy and were hoping to add to Paul's suffering. But Paul holds neither personal jealousy nor desire for credit or prestige. He rejoices that Christ is preached, even though some of the preachers have motives that are not good (vs. 15-18). Paul sees Christ through it all and is confident of a happy ending (v. 19). His expectation and hope is to magnify Christ in his body (v. 20). Paul's commitment is a very simple one, yet profound, "*For to me to live is Christ, and to die is gain*" (v. 21). If he continues to live, he will continue to be a Christian and preach Christ. If, on the other hand, the outcome of his impending trial is death, then he will glorify Christ in his death.

This marvelous passage has been looked upon by many as the key to the book of Philippians and has become an essential key to our Christian lives. This research will consider Paul's statement from a practical view, that is, what does such a statement mean for me and my life? What will some of the implications be when such a statement as this is at the center of our lives, as it was for Paul?

Before considering the implications of Paul's statement in verse 21, a closer look at verse 20 is required. Philippians 1:20 states,

According to my earnest expectation and my hope, that in nothing I shall be ashamed, but that with all boldness, as always, so now also Christ shall be magnified in my body, whether it be by life, or by death.

He wanted Christ to be magnified, that is, held up to the view of all as the one and only Savior of mankind, regardless of what might happen to him personally. How would Paul magnify Christ by his life? He made Jesus the focus of his life (Phil. 3:7-8). He would magnify Christ

by devoting his life to serving Christ (Gal. 2:20). In fact, as long as he lived, he declared that he would give fruitful service to Christ (Phil. 1:22), as well as promote the fruitful growth and spiritual progress of his brethren (Phil 1:25-26). Paul would magnify Christ by his attitude toward Christ, which was an attitude of living for Christ (Phil. 1:21).

For To Me To Live Is Christ, And To Die Is Gain

First, a statement such as this would mean that Paul was presenting his body as a living sacrifice to God. Romans 12 serves as a good illustration of what this passage is emphasizing (Phil. 1:21). Romans 12:1 states,

I beseech you therefore, brethren, by the mercies of God, that ye present your bodies a living sacrifice, holy, acceptable unto God, which is your reasonable service.

For eleven chapters in Romans Paul discusses the blessings that are to be received by God through Christ. In light of this he says, present your bodies as a living sacrifice. To present our bodies as living sacrifices is to use our bodies in the service of Christ. Notice Paul's use of the word "*living*" in the passage. For Paul to use the phrase "*living sacrifice*" is to refer to the constant, continuous sacrifice that one is to offer and not just an occasional dedication of one's body to the service of the Lord. A person does not offer his being to God today and then take his body into his own hands and use it as he pleases tomorrow. A living sacrifice is a person who dedicates his body to live for God and to keep on living for God. Notice also Paul's use of the word "*sacrifice*." Our lives are to be just that, a sacrifice. Under the Old Testament dispensation, offerings were made of living animals that were offered on an altar to God. The passage

teaches that we offer our bodies, our lives, and our very being to God for His service. The child of God lives for God by obeying Him and serving Him. It means that we give up our own selfish ambitions and desires, and serve God as well as we can while here on this earth.

Perhaps an illustration will be of help. For instance, we have two eyes with which to read and study God's word, we have two ears to hear the message of the gospel, and we have a mouth and a tongue to use in teaching and preaching the gospel. We have two hands that we may use in the service of others, and we have two feet to carry the gospel message to those who will hear. As one reads the book of Acts, he is certainly impressed with the way Paul did just as he instructed in this passage (Rom. 12:1; Phil. 1:21). He used every opportunity to teach others about the benefits to be enjoyed in Christ. The three great missionary journeys of Paul are monumental in that they speak of places which must have seemed far away to the ancient travelers of the first century. Yet, they carried the message of Christ to these faraway places because of their devotion and dedication. Lives such as these serve as examples for us so that we may better understand what it truly means to say, "*For to me to live is Christ.*"

Therefore, if one is to "*live for Christ,*" and do so successfully, then one will live life for God as a living sacrifice. Stop and ask yourself the question, "*What does life mean to me?*" Why are you living? What is your great purpose in life? Are you living for money and possessions (clothes, houses, cars, property)? If so, what do you do in a few years when you die, that is, if you happen to escape any form of life-threatening accident or disease? What is going to happen to you when you lose your possessions? When that day comes, and it is coming, there is nothing in heaven or on earth that can stop it.

If you have lived for material possessions, what good will it do you then? This is the very thing for which the child of God should seek: to live our lives so as to be acceptable and well pleasing in the sight of God. I Corinthians 6:20 states, *“For ye are bought with a price: therefore glorify God in your body, and in your spirit, which are God’s.”* Paul used his body as an instrument of righteousness. Romans 6:13 states,

Neither yield ye your members as instruments of unrighteousness unto sin: but yield yourselves unto God, as those that are alive from the dead, and your members as instruments of righteousness unto God.

The word *“members”* refers to the members of the body—the hands, the feet, the tongue, etc. Paul is saying that we should not use our members as *“instruments of unrighteousness,”* that is, we must not devote the use of our bodies to accomplish sin and iniquity. Rather, we are to devote ourselves to God and His service.

This is certainly at odds with the common approach to life in our modern culture. There are those who would live their lives for nothing but comfort (a good job, a nice place to live, plenty to eat, and enough money to do what they desire now and at retirement). If anything threatens their comfort, then they choose comfort over truth. If so, what happens when disease or an accident or tragedy strikes or old age comes, as one or the other is coming? It cannot be stopped. If you have lived for comfort, what good will it do you eternally? Are you living for position? If so, what do you do when you are edged out, removed, demoted, transferred, or by-passed? If you are living for family, as important as our families are, what will you do when the family or family members are transferred, move away, or when the various family members die? What good will families do if we have lived for family

rather than for Christ when we meet Christ in eternity? There are those who live for recognition, honor, popularity, recreation, and gratification. What do you do when you face the crises of life and then in the end come face to face with death? At that moment, what good will anything on this earth do the individual facing the judgment?

Second, a statement such as this would imply that Paul is in control of his mind and continually focuses his heart upon Jesus Christ. Philippians 4:8 states,

Finally, brethren, whatsoever things are true, whatsoever things are honest, whatsoever things are just, whatsoever things are pure, whatsoever things are lovely, whatsoever things are of good report; if there be any virtue, and if there be any praise, think on these things.

Not only must the Christian guard carefully his actions so as to keep himself in harmony with God's will for his life, but as the passage points out, God is concerned with how we think as well. Paul's final exhortation emphasizes that we think about that which is true; that would mean, among other things, that each one maintain the truth about God, about eternity, about judgment, and about man's character. Those things which are just would have to do with maintaining a right relationship with each other and being just in all of our dealings. To remain pure and chaste in our heart and mind is emphasized as well. Paul's admonition concludes with the instruction to think of these things, that is, let them be the object of careful attention and study so as to practice them. The child of God should think about what they are and think on the obligation to observe them. What we think is very important. I John 2:16 states,

For all that is in the world, the lust of the flesh, and the lust of the eyes, and the pride of life, is not of the Father, but is of the world.

John’s reference to the world is a reference to all that is not authorized by God for our lives, but rather is of this world—all that would destroy our relationship with God. Therefore, the Christian will refuse to indulge in the lust of the flesh (immorality, inordinate emotions), the lust of the eyes (materialism, greed, covetousness), and the pride of life (vainglory, boasting, arrogance). All these matters can be summarized with one word—sin. Emotional states of mind are often the result of sin as well. Anxiety, worry, depression, despair, discontentment, and fear, when not caused by some organic condition, are often the results of sin (perhaps not sinful action per se, but rather sinful thinking). If the individual is to control his thoughts, then he must control what he sees, reads, and hears. Our minds should have only what is wholesome, pure, and clean. This will mean that we will monitor television viewing, as well as what we see in the cinema. What one reads will require censorship, as not everything available either to us or to our young people is profitable for Christian growth and spiritual maturity. Evil thoughts will come into the mind of even the very best of people; however, the sin is not in the coming of the thought but in entertaining the thought. How shall we control these thoughts? First, by making sure that our hearts and minds are filled with the revelation of God. David said, “*Thy word have I hid in mine heart, that I might not sin against thee*” (Psm. 119:11). Second, that is why Bible study is so important for each of us. It is important for the congregation to study seriously God’s word, but it is also important for us as individuals to do the same. The more we fill our hearts with the word of God, the more we are able to set the direction of our thoughts. We would be better served if we would realize that the old adage “*a penny for your thoughts*” in reality means “*an eternity for your thoughts.*” That is

what our thoughts will cost us—an eternity. For one to live for Christ will mean that he thinks for Christ by disciplining both his heart and his mind to think what he ought to think.

Third, a statement such as this would imply that Paul was devoting himself to preaching the gospel so that others might live eternally. The apostle Paul was one of the greatest of preachers in the first century. II Corinthians 5:11 states,

Knowing therefore the terror of the Lord, we persuade men; but we are made manifest unto God; and I trust also are made manifest in your consciences.

From this one realizes that Paul understood that preaching was an important part of his work for Christ. Paul's work was to present the gospel so as to persuade, motivate, induce, provoke, and excite so as to urge man to obedience as directed by Christ. It is the gospel that saves (Rom. 1:16); therefore, it is the gospel that is to be preached. The gospel reveals God's righteousness, that is, the way God makes men righteous (Rom. 1:17). The gospel, when preached, reveals the unrighteousness of man, that is, his need for salvation from the guilt of his sin (Rom. 1:18). The gospel, when preached, reveals the wrath of God against all unrighteousness (v. 18). The gospel has facts to be believed (I Cor. 15:1-4), as well as commands to be obeyed (II Thess. 1:7-9).

Acts 26:18 states,

To open their eyes, and to turn them from darkness to light, and from the power of Satan unto God, that they may receive forgiveness of sins, and inheritance among them which are sanctified by faith that is in me.

Preaching the gospel of Christ is the greatest work that

one may do. This truth and all those attached to it were near and dear to the heart of Paul, and they should be to us as well. There is the great need for preaching today because the world is preaching, and it is not preaching the message of Christ but rather a message of error and deception. The worldly view is that religion is a failure. Modern man must have something else in order to meet his needs as a human being. The world is using our culture to pressure people into being converts. There is the pressure of “*big city living*,” which pressures man into thinking that man is not responsible for what he does. Man may live as he chooses, and everyone else is expected to look upon his behavior as acceptable. There is the pressure of modern philosophy, which pressures man into thinking that man himself is the measure of all things and that he really does not need anyone or anybody to help him with his problems. There is the pressure placed upon man from the field of science, saying that science will give man the answers to his questions. Given enough time and knowledge man will answer all of his own problems; he does not need God.

When there is a time of great trial and problem for Christianity, that is also the time of great opportunity. Christianity has faced trying times in the past and has been victorious because Christians saw the need to preach the gospel. Christ has proclaimed, “*Lo I am with you all the days even until the end of the earth*” (Matt. 28:20). Therefore we see that there is a great need for gospel preaching because of the world in which we live. Due to the great power of the gospel there is the need to spread the message of Christianity by this means.

Fourth, a statement such as this implies that living for Christ is the best of all possible lives that one can live. It is clear that Paul’s sole aim in living is to glorify Christ. He is the supreme end of one’s life. For this to

be accomplished, one must come to know as much about Christ as is possible to know. We must know about His character, His purpose, and the relationship He sustains to the Father (see Phil. 3:10; Eph. 3:19; John 17:3). We must imitate Christ to make Him the model of our lives. We must make Christianity known as far as possible; to this Paul seriously gave his life and devoted his great talents to it. This is why Paul expresses in Philippians the joy which he has. He now is in prison because he has been an apostle unto the Gentiles. As was mentioned, the church at Philippi had stood with Paul and remained faithful. He prayed for them, making his request with joy (1:4). Speaking about the inappropriate motives of some in their preaching, he states,

What then? notwithstanding, every way, whether in pretence, or in truth, Christ is preached; and I therein do rejoice, yea, and will rejoice (Phil. 1:18).

In other words, the gospel of Christ is being preached, and I am happy about that. There was hope, happiness, and purpose in Paul's life, as it is with every child of God. There are the blessings we receive from God in this life, as well as the hope of eternal life, which is to come. All of this adds to the beauty and dignity of life for God. Christ gives meaning and purpose to life.

However, compare that to what the world has to offer. W. T. Stace, former professor of philosophy at Princeton University, in his essay "*Man Against Darkness*" maintains that modern man is in a chaotic and bewildering state. He holds that this state of affairs is due to man's loss of faith in God and his abandonment of religion. He erroneously holds that religion is now dead and that man's existence is hollow at its very core. Man must realize that there is no spirituality outside

himself, and man should learn to be content with the realization of such. Though it is not the purpose of this research to present and defend the truthfulness of Christianity as it is opposed by atheism, still the bleak picture the atheist offers as an explanation to life can easily be compared to the joy and hope that is offered in Christianity. For Paul to say, “*For to me to live is Christ, and to die is gain,*” is better understood when one learns of the alternative.

Fifth, a statement such as this implies that death to the Christian is not a horrid ending to be shunned, but a victory to be gained. Romans 14:8 states,

For whether we live, we live unto the Lord;
and whether we die, we die unto the Lord:
whether we live therefore, or die, we are the Lord's.

Paul is referring to the state of death and not the act of dying. Those who die as children of God die in Christ and are now at home with the Lord and are in a far more blessed state than the saints on earth. No one, when they face death, will ever regret that he has lived for Christ. But every man who lives for himself will regret it at the time of death.

Paul, in his reference to death, uses the word “*gain*” (profit, advantage). The meaning of the word conveys the idea that there is an advantage in dying above that of living. There are important benefits that would result to one personally should he die. What gain is there in death? (1) In death there is the freedom from sin and temptation. Here, sin is the source of sorrow; in heaven there will be no sin. No one, while living here, knows when one will be tempted or just how powerful that temptation may be. We are told that we must resist temptation and that God's word provides sufficient power for one to overcome each temptation to sin. In heaven,

however, there will be no temptation; there will be no allurements to lead one astray. (2) In death there is freedom from all enemies. Here, of course, the Christian must contend with the slanderer, the false teacher, and the persecutor of God's people, but there will be no injustices in heaven. (3) In death there is freedom from suffering, both physically as well as mentally. However, even though each must face such here, over there, there is no place for sickness, no sorrow, and no tears. There are advantages to be gained in death, which causes one to realize that death to the Christian is not the horrid experience that the world would have one to believe. However, Paul does not wish for death. There is no hint of pessimism; he does not ask, "*I have suffered so much, is life really worth living?*" He knows that it is, because Christ is the great purpose and direction of his life. Therefore, his life has meaning, purpose, and direction. He is not the worn-out roue who has been self-indulgent to every form of pleasure life has to offer. He has not become worn out with exhausting labors as a child of God, who is anxious to rid himself of trials and persecutions. There is nothing here that conveys the idea that Paul is soured on life or cynical about life. If Paul's expression was to be construed as an expression of weariness and a desire to escape from suffering, responsibility, labor, and temptation, then it would have been a selfish one and would have implied that Paul was living for himself. However, his assertion marks the true connection between what death really is and the Christian's gain. Death, therefore, is gain to the Christian in that it puts an end to sin, as well as the temptations to sin, and ushers the child of God into full possession of his inheritance with the saved in eternity. It puts one into a closer union with Christ, enabling one to have a higher form of life, eternal life. This fact causes Paul to

say; “*to die is gain.*” However, Paul goes on to say that he has every intention of living. The reason he would wish to continue, even in the midst of such great persecution, was to be of service to others. Philippians 1:24 and 25 states,

Nevertheless to abide in the flesh is more needful for you. And having this confidence, I know that I shall abide and continue with you all for your furtherance and joy of faith.

The Christian lives in preparation for death. Our lives are short and uncertain; therefore, the Christian is content to live and content to die. Jesus prayed, “*Thy will be done.*” This should be our attitude. Death is a great loss to the carnally minded man. He loses all his comforts and all his hopes. In contrast, to the Christian it is gain. Those who know the value of heaven will readily acknowledge it is far better to be in heaven than to be in this world.

Summation

Briefly stated, for Paul to say to the Christians at Philippi, “*For to me to live is Christ, and to die is gain,*” gives them and us the pattern for Christian living. Christianity is Christlikeness. The Christian is the servant of Christ. Our object in life is to do the work of Christ as His disciples and to live as He has taught in the pages of the New Testament. I Peter 2:21 states, “*Christ also suffered for us, leaving us an example, that ye should follow in his steps.*” It was characteristic of Jesus that He did the will of the Father. His prayer, just before He was taken to be crucified, was, “*Not my will, but thine, be done*” (Luke 22:42). That was more than just a prayer; it was the way He lived. May we so live that we, too, may truthfully say, “*For to me to live is Christ, and to die is gain.*”

Chapter 19

Victory In Christ

• Revelation •

Johnny Ramsey



A native of Sherman, Texas • Graduate of Abilene Christian College • Johnny has been preaching for 50 years, living in Australia for three of those years • He has held almost 1000 gospel meetings in 43 states and 17 countries • Brother Ramsey is the author of 10 books, 25 tracts and over 1,000 printed articles • Married to Iris Baker • They have four children and nine grandchildren.

Victory in Christ is the glorious theme of the grand and eloquent book that closes the Bible story! Written to persecuted saints at the end of the first century concerning things that would shortly come to pass, the thesis of Revelation is found in 2:10 of the book: *“Be faithful unto death.”*

The Lord promised the crown of life to those who remained loyal even in the face of imminent death. To be a faithful child of God in the persecution days of the Roman Empire was no easy task. Seventeen times in twenty-two chapters we will find the key word of the Revelation—overcome. The salient point of the brilliant treatise was this: Overcome, and you can come over to live with God!

In fact, Revelation 3:21 says just that. Jesus, who had to overcome Satan, self and sin, promises the beautiful home of heaven to His followers who do the same! The background to Revelation is found in such passages as Matthew 5:10-12, John 15:16ff, Romans 8:18

and II Timothy 2:11-12. Those verses, along with James 1:2 and I Peter 4:12-16 promised early Christians that tribulation, duress and death would be a part of serving the Lord. No statement is more directly to the point of suffering for Christ than Philippians 1:29: “...*not only to believe on him, but also to suffer for his sake.*”

Paul admitted that as a loyal devotee of the Savior he stood in jeopardy every hour and the sentence of death always hovered over him (I Cor. 15:30-31; II Cor. 1:9). In the book of I John, written by the same one who penned Revelation, we learn explicitly that Christ came to destroy the power of Satan and gave us victory through faith because “...*he that is in us is greater than he that is in the world*” (I John 3:8; 4:4; 5:4).

The very first verse in this final Bible section tells us that these things would be in signs and symbols. This type of literature is called apocalyptic. Such material deals with principles such as the triumph of truth regardless of earthly odds that seem to dominate the scene. The great battle that occupies the stage of life has always been between God and Satan, truth and error, heaven and hell. At times it seems certain that the devil will surely win but ultimately the victory goes to the faithful servants of the Savior. As Paul stated in Romans 8, so John was privileged to affirm throughout Revelation:

We are more than conquerors...If God be for us, who can be against us...Nothing can separate us from the love of God that is in Christ Jesus our Lord!

It makes no real difference as to the dating of the writing of Revelation for it relates the same message for all men of all time: God’s loyal, devoted servants will be eternally blessed!

A brief, clear outline of the contents of the Revelation should be helpful.

Chapters 1-3: Introduction: Letters to the 7 Churches

Chapters 4-11: The 7 Sealed Books

Chapters 12-20: The Great Battle; God vs. Satan

Chapters 21-22: Victory In Christ

In the opening stanza of the book we learn that congregations of the Lord's people in Ephesus, Smyrna, Pergamos, Thyatira, Sardis, Philadelphia and Laodicea originally received the Revelation. The first three chapters contain specific material addressed to each church by the Lord. Five of the seven are rebuked. Only two—Smyrna and Philadelphia are praised. Ephesus had lost its earlier zeal for things divine, Pergamos allowed false teachers, Thyatira had compromised on morals, Sardis claimed to be strong but was spiritually dead while Laodicea boasted of wealth though in the Lord's view was "*poor, miserable, wretched, blind and naked.*" They had everything but Christ and that equals zero! The book of Revelation is unique in that it is a compilation of the things John saw and wrote in a book (1:11; 1:19). Similar to Ezekiel's Valley of Dry Bones, wherein God taught the prophet through a vision he recorded so is this final book of the Bible. When we read Revelation we can see what John saw 1900 years ago. This last book in Holy Scripture is not a narrative in chronological order like Matthew or Acts. It is a section of the Bible much like parts of Ezekiel, Daniel and Zechariah filled with imagery and symbolism that emphasize the principle: Truth will Triumph!

In the opening chapter Christ is introduced as One who has walked in a fiery furnace (1:15). Did not such a Friend walk with Daniel's friends and deliver them

(Dan. 3:17)? He is also shown to be the Redeemer who was alive, then dead and now is alive forevermore (1:18). What a comfort to first century Christians who were being intensely persecuted, imprisoned and killed for the cause of the Lord.

They might be put to death by gladiators in the arena of Rome or devoured by wild beasts to please the Caesar of their day—but by the power of God they too would be raised from the dead (Rom. 1:4). The bars of death could not hold the Christ (Matt. 16:18) nor could they prevent Christians from living with the Master forever. The cause of the Savior is more powerful than all the demons in hell or rulers of earth. Paul beautifully told the saints in Corinth that death is swallowed up in victory by the power of Christ (I Cor. 15:54-57). The book of Revelation opens with this grand message of hope. If Christians are called upon to die for Christ it is no strange thing because He had already died for them (II Cor. 5:14; 8:9)! Truly, by the grace of God, “...*Jesus...taste death for every man*” (Heb. 2:9).

In one of the basic tenets of the whole Bible the message to Smyrna is graphic indeed: “*Be faithful unto death and I will give you the crown of life.*” It is significant that the Lord did not demand wealth, fame, prosperity or popularity. But He does demand loyalty—something every Christian is capable of doing. We may be put to death for being faithful but, oh, what a way to die!

In the first paragraph of chapter three we learn the solemn fact that some names once recorded in the Lamb’s book of life may be blotted out by the Lord due to impurity and lack of dedication. But, beautifully and poignantly, in 3:20 we see the Redeemer pleading for entrance into every heart. We must open the door of our

lives and invite Him in—yes, whosoever will (Rev. 22:17). What an eternal tragedy to shut the Savior out of our sojourn upon this earth. Surely we will act more wisely than that!

The real drama of Revelation begins in 4:1 where John sees a most encouraging scene depicting the awesome power of a majestic God. There is a door wide open in heaven, Jehovah upon the Throne of Glory and a rainbow over the throne. This is a clear portrayal of the access Christians have to heavenly power. Though the saints on earth, to whom the Revelation was originally sent, met only shut doors in the Roman empire, and uncaring Caesars occupied earthly thrones, there was a door wide open in the halls of heaven where a gracious Father always had time for His own.

Later we will see in chapters five and eight that the prayers of the saints came into the heavenly realm as sweet incense before God. The language of Hebrews 4:16 and I Peter 3:10-12 tells us to boldly pray in time of need, for God's ears are open to the pleas of the righteous. Also, in the graphic imagery of John's view can be found one of the many Old Testament references that made Revelation such a joy to first century Christians in the midst of trials. John beheld a rainbow over the throne in the scene depicted. After the flood (Gen. 9) Jehovah placed a rainbow in the sky to remind men that the wicked are punished and the righteous are rewarded. Judgment upon all men will come someday. In the midst of extreme opposition the saints of 1900 years ago were comforted by the symbolism of 4:1 in Revelation.

In chapter five we have one of the bitter-sweet cameo views of apocalyptic literature. In the hand of Him who sat upon the Throne was a book sealed seven

times. It was official, important and full of the wrath of God and the future hope of the faithful ones. Only Christ, who is both Lion and Lamb, is worthy and capable to open the book and reveal its contents.

In many ways, 5:12-14 is the pivotal passage in Revelation. Yes, Worthy is the Lamb. Compare this context with Daniel 7:13-14 and Psalms 24:9-10. Truly Christ is King of kings and Lord of lords (I Tim. 6:15). The whole point of this section is to prove that the crucified Savior is much more powerful in time and eternity than those who put Him to death. To die in Christ is far better than to live in sin! In fact one of the beauty spots of the whole Bible is 14:13 of Revelation:

...Blessed are the dead which die in the Lord from henceforth: Yea, saith the Spirit, that they may rest from their labours; and their works do follow them.

Chapter six of this rich book introduces us to the fact that power struggles on earth do not compare to spiritual relationships that go beyond this vale of tears. The seals of that seven-sealed book are broken now. Six of them are in chapter six. We will have to read through chapter eleven to get the seventh and final one but much is accomplished in this one stanza—Revelation 6!

The first four seals deal with the conquest of Rome. But the power of Caesar wanes as war looms on the horizon to be followed by famine, pestilence and death. Then, suddenly, the fifth seal is broken and the scene shifts from life in the Roman Empire to eternal life in the divine realm. John beheld martyrs, beheaded for the testimony of Jesus crying out for vengeance from the Lord (Deut. 32:35) upon those who had persecuted them. They wanted to know how long evil men would dominate the saints of God and the truth of the gospel

(6:10). The last paragraph of this section (6:14-17) forever shows us that judgment upon the ungodly will come in devastating power—and *“who shall be able to stand?”* It is in chapter six and the fifth seal that we find the key to the rest of the book of Revelation.

For, in the ensuing chapters one reads of the gigantic struggle between God’s cause and Satan’s army. Finally, in chapter twenty the warfare comes to a close with Satan bound and all the friends of the devil gone. When the storm clouds clear away John will see those martyrs again. But this time they will not be dejected but elated. They will not be defeated but victorious. They will not be under thrones but seated upon thrones reigning with Christ. John will then write these impressive and memorable words: *“This is the first resurrection.”*

Yes, the cause for which the martyrs died has been vindicated and is victorious. This is the basic point of Revelation. To zealous but imprisoned Christians it was exceedingly comforting to know that ultimately their cause would gain the laurel wreath of victory. This is a message valuable in any age for the saints of God. We often sing: *“Be not dismayed whatever betide—God will take care of you.”*

In the hour of deepest trial the Christians can be assured that the Creator will take care of His own. That is why demons in hell tremble and children of God rejoice. Another gospel song assures us: *“I know my heavenly Father knows and tempers every wind that blows.”*

Just as Ezekiel saw the revival of a cause that seemed lost in the captivity in Babylon (Ezek. 37) so did John joyously view the resurrection of the cause of Christ out of the troubled days of Roman domination in his

day. That is the thrust of the drama known as Revelation. What cause for rejoicing!

In the seventh chapter of Revelation John saw a great host that had come out of great tribulation having been cleansed by the blood of Christ. They stand on Mt. Zion with the Lamb of God and partake of water that quenches their thirst forever! What a lovely sight. If you had been starving for a drink of water in a Roman jail would not such symbolism warm your heart and thrill your soul?

Acts 14:22 tells us that those who became Christians in that era entered the kingdom with much tribulation. In chapters eight and nine we learn that the prayers of the Christians entered the realm of heaven as sweet incense while the wrath of God was poured out upon evil men. In spite of the fact that both the love of God and His wrath were extended toward the wicked neither phased those sinners (9:20-21). But, in the Day of Judgment the Lord will be vindicated.

Chapter ten of Revelation is a clear reminder of Ezekiel 2 where God told his servant to take the Word and “*eat it up.*” Ezekiel and John were to thoroughly digest the sacred text and then share it with others. It was sweet to their taste but bitter in their stomachs.

Ezekiel worked for the Lord during Babylonian captivity days while John labored for truth in the sad moments of Roman domination. In each era it was serious business to be servants of Jehovah. In Psalms 34:8 and Jeremiah 15:16 we learn that Holy Scripture is sweet to the spiritual taste but can become “*a bitter pill to swallow*” when digested and then shared with an evil world and indifferent worldly brethren. In chapters eleven and eighteen we learn that unless children of God came out of the environment of the world they would

be consumed with the world in devastating judgment (II Cor. 6:14-7:1). This is a lesson brethren need to learn today!

In chapter eleven John is told to measure the people by the standard of righteousness to see if they are pure and holy (Matt. 5:8; I Peter 1:16). Some students of the Bible think 11:15-16 to be the grandest passage in Revelation. John is blessed to see that eventually the kingdoms of this world will become subservient to the Kingdom of Christ in very way (Matt. 28:18). *There is no power but of God* is the brilliant, cogent utterance of Romans 13:1 and the Psalmist declared that “*God ruleth by his power forever.*” What a declaration of pungent glory at a time Rome seemed to dominate Christianity!

The major dividing line in this final section of the Bible is chapter 12 where one can see a tumultuous struggle between Satan and Christ. John beheld the tenacity of the Devil “*who is the deceiver of the whole world*” (12:9) and one so awesome he can only be defeated by the blood of Christ, the Word of God and by those so devoted to truth they are willing to die for that cause (Rev. 12:11).

When “*that old Serpent*” is unable to overthrow the Lord he tries desperately to demolish those who follow the Savior. In chapter thirteen we are introduced to the two fierce friends of the Devil who will combine in a powerful onslaught against the cause of righteousness. These grotesque beasts form a tandem of restless materialism and false religion that manifested itself in the emperor worship of the Roman empire. A combination of church and state that had a subtle attraction.

From 29 B.C. forward the Caesars were known as Augustus—the august or mighty one—“*the one to be*

worshipped.” But Christians can only worship the Lord our God (Matt. 4:10) so that posed a problem. In order to escape persecution, citizens of the Roman Empire had to bow down before the Emperor. Those failing to do so could not “*buy, sell and get gain.*” Followers of Christ, therefore, were in constant danger. Those who compromised had a mark upon them (13:18) that showed how imperfect they were. The number 7 is a term of perfection, completeness and wholeness in Revelation. Anything less than that would be imperfect. The number of any man who surrendered to the pressure of false worship was 666—far short of that which God intended. In several books in my library I have seen the number the ancients gave to Christ—it was 888—far above human idealism!

In 14:4 and 14:13 we have two dynamic verses. The first one informs us only those who follow Jesus wherever He goes can expect to finally walk the golden street of glory. The second verse mentioned tells us that means only those who die in the Lord will be forever blessed or happy.

In chapter fifteen the ransomed host sing a song with two stanzas—the song of Moses and the Lamb. Yes, the redeemed of all ages hymn an anthem of victorious deliverance as those with Moses did in Exodus 14:14 “*Our God will fight for us.*”

In that Old Testament context we learn that the enemy perished in the very sea that dramatically ushered Israel toward safety and the promised land. We are on our way to “*the rest that yet remains*” for the people of God (Heb. 4:9) and we shall reach that shore through the leadership of Christ Jesus our Lord!

Chapter sixteen uses an Old Testament reference that bolsters the faith of oppressed saints in every age.

The word plague reminds us of Exodus 7-11 where the Egyptians were beset by serious problems due to rebellion against the Creator while, at the same time, the people of God were untouched. The saints of the first century were comforted by the knowledge that earthly woes would soon be reversed and Rome's doom was shortly to arrive. In the language of Psalms 126:5 we find consolation: *"They that sow in tears shall reap in joy."*

The sections of Revelation now considered, chapters 17-19 are rich in metaphors and imagery pertinent to apocalyptic literature. The major emphasis of these chapters can be summed up by Psalms 144:15: *"...happy is that people, whose God is the LORD."*

The doom of the wicked and the gloom attached to their style of life is vividly contrasted with the end result of righteousness. It truly pays to serve Jesus now and in the world to come (Mark 10:30). In a marvelous verse we learn that the Lord is King of kings and we are called, chosen and faithful (17:14).

The city of Rome is identified as a sparkling exhibit of revelry and hell-bent enthusiasm but noticeably defiled in contrast to the sincerity and purity of the bride of Christ. Rome's riches and temporal power fades *"...in one hour..."* (18:17) as her sins come up before heaven. The Redeemer in awesome power slays the wicked by the sword of the Spirit, the Word of God (19:15). Evil men are feasted upon by birds of prey while children of God feast with the Savior at the marriage feast of the bride of the Lamb. What a contrast! This is the essence of the book of Revelation's imagery. There is a vast chasm between truth and error and the rewards at the end of the way.

Chapter twenty is the story of the binding of Satan

by the power in the death of Christ. In Mark 3:27, Hebrews 2:14, I Corinthians 15:54 and John 12:31-33 the New Testament clearly affirms that the cross of Christ had tremendous repercussions in hell. Jesus spoiled the devil's goods, defeated him absolutely and removed the sting of death from the devil's arsenal. When Christians died for the cause of Christ that victory over Satan was remembered one more time. Church historians often wrote these words: *“The blood of the martyrs was the seed of Christianity.”*

Though chained by the power of the gospel, the devil still has power but only when weak and sinful people enter his domain. Like a mad dog chained, Satan can only operate in the periphery of that chain. As long as we stay close to Christ the devil cannot harm us. At the end of chapter 20 John is inspired to write of a final day of reckoning wherein men shall be judged according to their deeds (20:11-15). Let us so live before God that the second death will not harm us!

Victory in Christ—chapters twenty one and twenty two form the grand conclusion of the Bible. What a glorious crescendo for the people of the Lord! Through twelve gates of pearls John sees the procession of the saints on higher ground. In a land of fadeless day where no darkness, sadness, sickness or separation ever enter, Christians will reap an enchanting reward. Pearls are made by friction, tribulation and pressure. The greater the tribulation the grander the pearls. And heaven belongs to those who press on to higher ground (Phil. 3:14).

Jesus is coming—My destiny to seal
Jesus is coming—I know that He will
Jesus is coming—In His presence may I stay
Jesus is coming—O Glorious Day!

No temple or cathedral is needed there for the Lord God Almighty is the only temple needed! Those whose names are in the Book of Life will walk that golden strand of beauty. The persecuted Christians of the Roman era to whom this book was addressed were blessed by the eloquent treatise known as Revelation—and so are we 20 centuries later.

Finally, as the last golden page of inspiration beckons us to its dramatic unveiling we see the Garden of Eden and the Tree of Life restored. The first real story of the Bible comes back again to our view in this panoramic document known as Revelation.

What man lost in Adam we gain in Christ. Sin drove man out of the presence of God. Obedience to Christ brings us back into His sublime presence (Rev. 22:14). And, “...whosoever will, let him...” The tree of the cross (I Peter 2:24) becomes our hope to partake of the Tree of Life forever. The Bible closes with the promise of Christ’s returning (22:20). May we so live that when that precious occasion comes we may rise to meet Him in the air and so to ever be with the Lord. These are words of comfort and joy to the Christian (I Thess. 4:13-18).

Beyond the Sunset, O glad reunion
With our dear loved ones
Who have gone before
O day of gladness, O day unending
Beyond the sunset, forevermore.

The book of Revelation comforted persecuted Christians in the first century and it still challenges us today. Let us read and study it for daily strength.

***Pressing Toward
The Prize***



Women’s Class

Chapter 20

My Goal As A Christian Woman And The Wife Of A Preacher Of The Gospel

• Philippians 3:14; 4:3 •

Jackie S. Balentine

Daughter of Inez and Richard Stanford • Youngest of five children (all girls) • Born and raised in northwest Alabama • Father preached for the church in northwest Alabama • Married Greg Balentine (1988) • Jackie and Greg have two sons (Ken, age 8 and Nathan, age 6).



In today's society we hear much talk concerning "goal-setting." Most of these goals will benefit us in our physical life. The goals of losing weight, going to college, being married, and having a family are a few of the ones more commonly pursued; however, these goals pale in comparison to the goal of a Christian. In Philippians 3:14 we read the goal of every Christian: "*I press toward the mark for the prize of the high calling of God in Christ Jesus.*" As a Christian woman, I should always remember the divine order of things that was set in motion in Genesis 1 when God created Eve to be a helpmeet for Adam in the Garden of Eden. This order is discussed further in I Corinthians 11:3,

But I would have you know, that the head of every man is Christ; and the head of the woman is the man; and the head of Christ is God.

So often today in our homes we see this order being changed or ignored altogether. Women “*wear the pants*” in the home. The husband has little or no input as to how the home is run or how the children are raised. He is too busy with work or outside recreational activities to worry about such inconsequential things as raising his children to love God and keep His commandments. These changes are eroding the moral fiber of our country very quickly. When our goals are not in keeping with God’s laws, we can expect confusion to reign.

When looking at the word goal, I noticed that the first two letters in the word spelled the word **GO**. This word is a verb or an “*action*” word. In order to set and achieve my Christian goals, I must be active in God’s kingdom. In Mark 16:15 Jesus said, “*And he said unto them, Go ye into all the world, and preach the gospel to every creature.*” The “*ye*” in this verse means me. I should strive each and every day to teach the gospel to at least one person. If I will set this as a personal goal, imagine what I can accomplish in just one year. I also must be willing to go by sending others when I am unable to go myself. When a person is willing and able to go to foreign countries or to mission fields in the United States, I must make every effort to help that person by praying for them and helping them with financial support. My goal is to work with other Christians to spread the gospel of Christ to everyone.

My goals as a preacher’s wife come in a more personal form. When my husband and I started discussing the possibility of his attending the Memphis School of Preaching, we also discussed the fact that our lives would change drastically. We would be moving to a new state, enrolling our children in a new school, making new friends, attending a different congregation,

and becoming students when we are both in our 30's. Change is intimidating to me as well as to most other people. I have a goal as a preacher's wife to be able to accept the changes that we make as part of my service to God.

As a wife of a minister, I must freely give of my time and abilities to other people. Frequently, there will be emergency situations that arise at a time when I have other plans. My goal is to have the patience and love for others that would help me to set aside my plans, and help in whatever capacity that I am able. There is the Biblical example of Dorcas in Acts 9:36. This passage states, "...*this woman was full of good works and almsdeeds which she did.*" I must be involved in good works to glorify God as Dorcas did.

I must also look after my own household. Often children of ministers are labeled as PK's (preacher's kids). In some cases it is sad, but true, that the minister's children are some of the worst-behaved in the congregation. I must make sure that my children are well taken care of at all times. Because I am the wife of the minister, I must take every chance to set the proper example before other wives and mothers in the congregation. If I am lazy, and I do not take proper care of loving and disciplining my children, how can I expect others to care for their children?

As the wife of a minister, I must have patience with my husband. In II Peter 1:5-8 we read,

And beside this, giving all diligence, add to your faith virtue; and to virtue knowledge; And to knowledge temperance; and to temperance patience; and to patience godliness; And to godliness brotherly kindness; and to brotherly kindness charity. For if these things be in you, and abound, they make you that ye shall

neither be barren nor unfruitful in the knowledge of our Lord Jesus Christ.

There will be times when my husband’s mind is weighted down with the concerns of the congregation, and I must strive to support him in times of trouble as well as in times of joy.

Lastly, my goal as a preacher’s wife is to be as is stated in I Corinthians 11:7 “...*the glory of the man.*” My husband is a wonderful husband, father, and most of all a fine Christian man. I, as his wife, have a goal to be the glory of this man. I must realize that my actions are a direct reflection on my husband and my family. My goal is to maintain the highest standards of morality and godliness. When I reach the end of this earthly journey, my prayer is that I will be remembered as a loving and Godly wife, mother, friend, sister and associate. The highest compliment that any woman can receive is to be called a virtuous woman as the woman was in Proverbs 31:10-31.

All in all, my goals are the same as any other Christian. I want an eternal home in Heaven, and I want everyone to go to Heaven with me. In order for this to happen, I must set goals and work to attain them. In order to reach any goal, I must always remember what Jesus said in Mark 10:27, “...*for with God all things are possible.*”

Chapter 21

My Goal As A Christian Woman And The Wife Of A Preacher Of The Gospel

• Philippians 3:14; 4:3 •

Jade Britton

A native of Tupelo, MS • Obeyed the gospel at the East Hill congregation in Pulaski, TN • Upon graduation from Memphis School of Preaching (June, 1999), the Brittons will work with the East Hill church • Married Brandon Britton (1994) • Jade and Brandon have two sons (Reese, age 4 and Kase, age 1).



Women have always played an important role in the growth and strengthening of the church. As we look back in the New Testament, we learn that there have been numerous women who have labored in the Gospel (Phil. 4:3). As we study, we ask ourselves which women could best help us to “...*press toward the mark for the prize of the high calling of God in Christ Jesus*” (Phil. 3:14). From these women of the Bible we can learn what kind of goals we need to set as Christian women today.

Our first example of a great Christian woman is Priscilla. Priscilla was a woman of courage who stood for the truth in reproofing error. We read in Acts 18:24-26 that Apollos was an eloquent man who was mighty in the Scriptures. He came to Ephesus teaching the things of the Lord, yet he only knew the baptism of

John. Priscilla and her husband Aquilla took him aside and taught him the way of the Lord more perfectly. It is our duty today to be teachers among the lost (Matt. 28:20), and to be “...set for the defence of the gospel” (Phil. 1:17). Christian women still have the responsibility to correct error by teaching the truth in love and with kindness.

We can look at Lydia and how she listened to the truth and obeyed the Gospel. Lydia was the first convert in the region of Macedonia. Once Lydia obeyed the Gospel she felt that it was her duty as a Christian to help others. She opened her home to Paul and Barnabas who were traveling around preaching the Gospel (Acts 16:14-15). As Christian women today we can likewise show our hospitality to other members of the church. We can visit the shut-ins. We can cook for the sick. We can provide housing for preachers as they travel through.

As we have therefore opportunity, let us do good unto all men, especially unto them who are of the household of faith (Gal. 6:10).

We can also learn from Phoebe to be a servant to the church. We can give our time and our money to the work of the church. We must be willing to work for the church whenever and wherever we are needed, if at all possible. We read in Romans 16:2 that Phoebe was also a comforter of many, even as we should be. We can offer our comfort to others at times of loss in their lives, but we should also provide comfort anytime it is needed. Another way that we are able to comfort others is to make them comfortable in our presence. We should strive to be the type of person that others enjoy being around. We should not be a woman of gossip, but our speech is to always be with grace (Col. 4:6).

Lois and Eunice teach us an essential part of our

lives as Christians. They were remembered not only for their faith in Christ, but also for how they instilled that faith in Timothy (II Tim. 1:5). In this country, women enjoy the freedom of having as many children as they want. We are free to teach our children our beliefs and govern them by our rules. We have the freedom and responsibility to teach our children the Gospel of Jesus Christ. We are very fortunate to have these blessings because many women around the world do not. Even though we are given this opportunity to teach our children daily from the time they are born, some wait until it is too late to begin. Others give the responsibility of teaching their children about the Lord to the Bible class teacher. When we take the time to teach our children we are setting an example for generations to come. We read in Titus 2:4-5,

That they may teach the young women to be sober, to love their husbands, to love their children, To be discreet, chaste, keepers at home, good, obedient to their own husbands, that the word of God be not blasphemed.

In Acts 9 we read of a woman by the name of Dorcas. Dorcas was a woman full of good works and almsdeeds (Acts 9:36). As she was dying, the widows stood by her side weeping and showing the coats and garments which Dorcas had made while she was with them (Acts 9:39). We know from these verses that Dorcas was greatly loved and that many people looked up to her. She was also remembered fondly by the women that were around her. We should make this one of our goals and strive to reach it. The Lord said in Matthew 5:16,

Let your light so shine before men, that they may see your good works, and glorify your Father which is in heaven.

Let us now ask ourselves, “*What are some good works that can be done by Christian women today?*” We have the opportunity to teach the children about Jesus and His church, and also other women. I know for myself that teaching the children is an opportunity I consider to be an honor. I try to do the best I can when I teach, hoping that the children will be interested and want to come back and learn more.

Yea, a man may say, Thou hast faith, and I have works: shew me thy faith without thy works, and I will shew thee my faith by my works (James 2:18).

Mary and Martha are perfect examples of women in the world today. We read in Luke 10:40-42 that Martha was busy with everyday affairs, while Mary was seeking to learn from the Lord. Martha asked the Lord, “...dost thou not care that my sister hath left me to serve alone?...” The Lord answered and told her that she was troubled with many things, but there is only one thing that is truly important. Mary had chosen to focus on the spiritual matters while Martha was concerned with the physical. The same problem still exists in the world today. There is only one thing truly needful to man, to serve the Lord. We need to be careful not to put all of our duties as mothers, wives, and homemakers before Christ. “*But seek ye first the kingdom of God, and his righteousness; and all these things shall be added unto you*” (Matt. 6:33).

All of these women labored diligently in the Gospel to do their part as Christian women. As a Christian woman I strive to reach my goal which is to have the courage of Priscilla in reproving error with the truth, the courtesy of Lydia, to be a comforter like Phoebe, a teacher to my family like Lois and Eunice, to be

remembered because of my work for the Lord as Dorcas, and to put Christ first in my life as Mary. If we follow the footsteps of these women, we will be ***“pressing toward the mark for the prize of the high calling of God in Christ Jesus”*** (Phil. 3:14).

Chapter 22

My Goal As A Christian Woman And The Wife Of A Preacher Of The Gospel

• Philippians 3:14; 4:3 •

Mary Lawson

Daughter of Patricia and Harold Bryant (Pensacola, FL • Attended Escambia High School • Married Richard Lawson (1991) • Working with the Yorkville Church (TN) while at Memphis School of Preaching • Mary and Richard have two children (Timothy, age 5 and Anna Marie, 9 months).



The apostle Paul wrote, by the inspiration of the Holy Spirit, of pressing “...*toward the mark*...” (Phil. 3:14).¹ Contained within this statement is the idea of having a goal, and working toward that goal. As a preacher’s wife, one should always have goals in life. There are certain goals that can be set in relation to one’s family. Some goals can be set in relation to the community in which she lives. Also, most importantly, goals should be set and pressed toward in relation to the Lord’s church. A discussion of these goals, and how to reach them, will help in the Christian walk here in this life.

Family Goals

First, consider the goals of the preacher’s wife in relation to her family. Every wife has the opportunity to support her husband. God has ordained that the wife’s

role is that of a helper (Gen. 2:18). One goal of a preacher's wife is for her to be the best helper to her husband that she can be. She can do this by caring for the home, and keeping things in order and running smoothly (Titus 2:5). Also, she can fulfill her obligation to be in submission to her husband (Eph. 5:22), to reverence him (Eph. 5:23), and to render unto him due benevolence concerning his physical needs (I Cor. 7:3). She is often in a position to help in his work with the congregation, whether visiting the sick, or going with him to Bible studies. Her goal should be that of the virtuous woman of Proverbs 31; that her husband can truly say of her, "*Her price is far above rubies.*"

The preacher's wife also has certain goals in raising her children. She is to do her part in bringing them up in the nurture and admonition of the Lord (Eph. 6:4). She is to heed God's instruction in Proverbs 22:6, "*Train up a child in the way he should go: and when he is old, he will not depart from it.*" Since the gospel preacher may be away from home, often for weeks at a time, the preacher's wife must be ready to play an even more active role than usual in disciplining the children. When one realizes the great influence of the mother over her children, she can understand the late brother Franklin Camp's statement: "*The godly woman is the most powerful force on the earth.*"²

Because of her great concern for the rest of her family, the preacher's wife may sometimes neglect herself as a part of that family. She should have certain goals concerning herself. Physically, she should try to keep herself reasonably fit and attractive. This does not mean that she can not "*take it easy*" at times, but appearance does play a role in her work. More importantly, she must care for herself spiritually. It is every Christians

responsibility to grow in the faith (II Peter 3:18). This growth does not come by “*magic*,” so time must be devoted to personal study of the Bible. II Timothy 2:15 applies to us all.

Goals Concerning The Community

It has often been said that the preacher and his family live in a glass house. This can be said of all Christians to some degree, because the world is always watching. One goal of the preacher’s wife should be to use this as an advantage rather than a disadvantage. When one is closely examined, she has a great chance to let her Christian light shine (Matt. 5:16). The correct example must be set before the people of the community. In attitude, conduct, speech, and even in dress, Christians have the opportunity to influence for good or for evil. By living sober, righteous, godly lives one can teach those around her (Titus 2:12).

Another goal concerning the community is in the area of benevolence. God desires for Christians to do good unto all men, especially those of the household of faith (Gal. 6:10). There will be people in the areas in which we live that genuinely need our help. Some will have physical needs like food and clothing. Some will be in need of financial assistance because of reasons beyond their control. For others, the main need in their lives will be a need for the gospel. A goal should be to help find them and then do what can be done to see that their needs are met.

Goals Concerning The Church

As a partner in the work of her husband, the local congregation plays a special role in the life of the preacher’s wife. She must have as one of her goals, unity

among the body of Christ (I Cor. 1:10). Paul pictures each member as a member of the human body (I Cor. 12:12). For things to work correctly, the members must work together in unity. The preacher's wife must have special care for her fellow members. Maybe it will be a phone call to check on someone who was not feeling well, or a cake, baked for the newcomer to let them know someone cares for them. Dedication to the Lord must be drawn. The example that is set before the members is important, and people should not wonder if attendance will be sacrificed when company visits from out of town, or a ball game is being played the night of services (Heb. 10:25).

The preacher's wife will likely be called upon, from time to time, to have guests in her home. She should look upon this as a great opportunity to get to know one another better. It will not be how spotless the home was, or the fine furnishings that make the impression, but the Christian fellowship that was enjoyed.

Conclusion

While one may have additional duties as a preacher's wife, her main goal is the same as every Christian. She sets out to live a life pleasing to the Lord. She desires to live a life of service to others. And, finally, when the labors of this life are over, she seeks to find her name written in the book of the life (Phil. 4:3).

Endnotes

1 All Bible quotations are from the King James Version of the Holy Bible.

2 Franklin Camp, (from a taped Bible Study series) available from the Adamsville Church of Christ (Adamsville, AL).

Chapter 23

My Goal As A Christian Woman And The Wife Of A Preacher Of The Gospel

• Philippians 3:14; 4:3 •

Sherri L. Lyons

Born July 11, 1959 • Married Joseph Lyons (1982) • Presently first year students at Memphis School of Preaching • Sherri and Joseph have two children (Vanessa, age 16 and Larry, age 14).



It is important to have a goal for which to strive. The Lord had a mission or goal when He came to earth. His goal was to do His Father's will and finish the work He was given to do: "*Jesus saith unto them, My meat is to do the will of him that sent me, and to finish his work*" (John 4:34). In Philippians 3:14 we read, "*I press toward the mark for the prize of the high calling of God in Christ Jesus.*" Thus, my ultimate goal as a Christian/preacher's wife is to press toward the mark. How can we press toward the mark?

One way is to grow in wisdom and knowledge. Peter writes:

But grow in grace, and in the knowledge of our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ. To him be glory both now and for ever. Amen (II Peter 3:18).

In order to grow in knowledge, one must possess the proper attitude toward the study of the word of God. Luke records the type of attitude one needs as we read in Acts 17:11:

These were more noble than those in Thessalonica, in that they received the word with all readiness of mind, and searched the scriptures daily, whether those things were so.

They searched the scriptures daily, not weekly or just on Sundays at services. As a Christian, I need to be grounded in the word. We read in II Timothy 3:

All scripture is given by inspiration of God, and is profitable for doctrine, for reproof, for correction, for instruction in righteousness: That the man of God may be perfect, thoroughly furnished unto all good works (II Tim. 3:16-17).

In order to be complete and able to adequately press toward the mark, one needs to grow in knowledge.

The second way one can press toward the mark, is to be a good example. We can teach God's word to those around us, but it will not be heeded unless they see us living what we teach. If our children grow up in a home where they see our love for God and His word, they will be more likely to grow to love God and His word, as well. If our co-workers and neighbors see us laughing at the off-color jokes and slacking off on company time, can they take seriously our pleas to attend services? Members at our local congregation must see us vigilant in our attendance, in our offering, and in our willingness to serve. We all have influence, whether that influence is good or bad. We are constantly watched by someone. Will that someone see Christ living in us or will he see

us as Satan’s friend?

A third way to press toward the mark is to obey the command given by the Lord:

Go ye therefore, and teach all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Ghost: Teaching them to observe all things whatsoever I have commanded you: and, lo, I am with you always, even unto the end of the world. Amen (Matt. 28:19-20).

As a Christian, I have to spread the Gospel of Christ. I can not slack off on this duty and hope to reach the mark.

As a preacher’s wife, I am going to have special goals to work toward in pressing for that mark. First, I am going to have to be an encouragement to my husband. In Philippians 1:3 Paul records “*I thank my God upon every remembrance of you.*” The apostle was encouraged by them and their love for him. Paul sent Tychicus to Colosse to comfort their hearts (Col. 4:8). Paul knew the importance of encouragement.

Second, I will have to work toward being unselfish about the time my husband spends with the members of the congregation. He has chosen a work that is very time consuming. I must allow him the time he will need to be successful in his work. If I am constantly nagging him about the time that he gives to the members of the congregation, will he be able to be effective? No, I think not. No one can work under those circumstances. I am reminded of Peter’s wife. It is recorded for us in Matthew 8:14,

And when Jesus was come into Peter's house, he saw his wife's mother laid, and sick of a fever.

That is about all we know of Peter's wife. Is her name recorded for us? Does it tell us anywhere that Peter had to hurry home from his journeys, because his wife was waiting? She must have been a very unselfish woman.

Last and not least, my goal as I press toward that mark is to be a helpmeet in Joe's work as a Gospel preacher. There is much work that can be done when two work as a team. We have examples in the Bible of such teams. Aquilla and Priscilla were a husband and wife team that helped Paul in many ways during his journeys. They conducted the services in their home, together they taught many people the word of God (Acts 18:26). We have heard the saying, "*Behind every good man is a good woman!*" I want to be that woman. Men are not always aware of the little things that need doing, they are concerned with the weightier jobs that need to be done. As women, we know that sometimes it is the little things that make or break a person. This is where I can be of help.

So, as I press toward that mark by growing in wisdom and knowledge of God's word, by being a good example, and by spreading the Gospel of Christ. As I strive to be encouraging to my husband in his work as a Gospel Preacher, and being unselfish with his time, in being his helpmeet in the work, I have an ultimate goal. At the end of my time here on this earth, I want to be able as Paul was, to say,

I have fought a good fight, I have finished my course, I have kept the faith: Henceforth there is laid up for me a crown of righteousness, which the Lord, the righteous judge, shall give me at that day: and not to me only, but unto all them also that love his appearing (II Tim. 4:6-8).

Chapter 24

My Goal As A Christian Woman And The Wife Of A Preacher Of The Gospel

• Philippians 3:14; 4:3 •

Aletha Ray

Born October 15, 1963 • Graduated from Baker High School and Jefferson Davis Jr. College (RN degree in nursing • Presently attending Memphis School of Preaching • Married Mike Ray (1980) • Aletha and Mike have four sons (Meghan, age 13, Moriah, age 10, Malachi, age 7, and Morghan, age 4).



As we look at the goals of a Christian/preacher's wife, we must realize that these goals can and should be set by any Christian wife as well as the preacher's wife. The Bible does not specifically name the qualifications for a preacher's wife as it does for the wives of elders and deacons (I Tim. 3), but we can use these Biblical qualities as examples for all Christian wives to follow.

One of my favorite passages is found in Romans 10:14-15,

How then shall they call on him in whom they have not believed? and how shall they believe in him of whom they have not heard? and how shall they hear without a preacher? And how shall they preach, except they be sent? as it is written, How beautiful are the feet of them that preach the gospel of peace, and bring glad tidings of good things!

My husband is that preacher and one of the jobs that I have as his helper is to wash the socks that go on those feet. It is not a degrading or lowly job. Every time a wife or mother cooks, cleans, or even washes clothes for her family she is doing the will of God and glorifying God by obeying Him. In Titus 2:5, the older women are told to teach the younger women,

To be discreet, chaste, keepers at home, good,
obedient to their own husbands, that the word
of God be not blasphemed.

What does this have to do with the subject at hand? Well I really have two goals. The first goal is to make our home a haven of hospitality. I would like everyone to feel welcome there. The wife determines the tone of the home. Her willingness to maintain a proper home will be the determining factor in whether the husband longs to come home to it or whether he avoids it. She is truly the “*queen*” of her home. The preacher’s home may not be the biggest, have the finest furniture, or be spotless, but it should be an open door to everyone—the new convert, the elders and deacons, even to the hypocrite. Showing hospitality is not only an action, it is an attitude. It may mean doing things when you might not feel like it or when it may not be the most convenient time. Romans 12:13 states we should be “...*given to hospitality.*” This trait is one all Christians should possess, and the preacher’s wife should pay careful attention to be given to hospitality. She can have a great influence over the ladies of the congregation by her example of hospitality.

Although hospitality is important, my goal of being my husband’s life-long partner in his work of preaching the gospel is even more important. We should be a team. The Bible gives us a beautiful example of such a team—

Aquilla and Priscilla. What they did they did together. They are mentioned six times in the New Testament, and they are always mentioned together. They traveled as a Christian team with Paul to Ephesus and remained there to work together for Christ. In Acts 18:26, they are shown teaching the way of God:

And he began to speak boldly in the synagogue:
whom when Aquilla and Priscilla had heard,
they took him unto them, and expounded unto
him the way of God more perfectly.

Paul and all the Gentile churches were grateful for their service as shown in Romans 16:4. Aquilla and Priscilla also welcomed the meeting of the church in their home as shown in Romans 16:5 and I Corinthians 16:19. Preachers and their wives today can learn from this Bible couple. The preacher will be much more effective if his wife is by his side. No other profession allows a wife to work so closely with her husband. Every day she comes in contact with the same people he works with and is usually associated with all the same events and activities in which he is involved. She can accompany him in teaching the lost, counseling members, visiting others, and attending gospel meetings. In certain situations it is actually better to have a couple than just one man. She can be alert for those situations and be available to help her husband in any way needed. Women are usually more sensitive to certain situations and notice people’s emotions and feelings more than a man does. This area is one where the preacher’s wife can be very helpful to him as they work together as a team in the work of the Lord.

A preacher’s wife can be his greatest help or his biggest hindrance in his life of preaching the gospel. She can encourage him by her words and actions. She

should be willing to help him in any area needed. She is his biggest fan. She should be like the virtuous woman in Proverbs 31:

The heart of her husband doth safely trust in her, so that he shall have no need of spoil. She will do him good and not evil all the days of her life.

A preacher's wife can, however, be his biggest hindrance. A poor attitude, disrespect for his authority and leadership in the home, and an unwillingness to sacrifice for the cause of Christ can cause discouragement and doubt about his chosen life as a preacher. Please let those of us who have chosen this life hold up the hands of our husbands in his work for the Lord—the greatest profession on the earth.

Chapter 25

My Goal As A Christian Woman And The Wife Of A Preacher Of The Gospel

• Philippians 3:14; 4:3 •

Melinda Reynolds

A 1991 graduate of Ball State University (B.S. in Elementary Education) • The Reynolds will be working with the Towne Acres Church in Muncie, Indiana after graduation from Memphis School of Preaching in June, 1999 • Married Mark Reynolds • Mindy and Mark have two daughters (Cassidy, age 4 and Abby, 10 months).



Mommy, *when I grow up I want to be a preacher's wife just like you!*" These words were heard several months ago when my three-year-old daughter firmly stated that she wanted to marry a preacher and be just like me! My prayers are for this very thing to happen; for what could be a more wonderful goal? When one thinks about a preacher's wife and the influence she can have for good, what better goal could one achieve than being a faithful wife of a preacher?

Being a preacher's wife never crossed my mind as I made goals earlier in my life. I grew up in a denominational world and had no interest in marrying a preacher. My goals were to graduate from college, marry, and have children. This, I thought, would make my life complete. This changed, however, when I met my husband, Mark, who showed me that my life was

not complete without the knowledge of Christ and His church. I obeyed the truth, and we were married the next year.

My goals, the first two years of marriage, did not include being a preacher's wife. My husband had mentioned the idea of preaching; however, I thought I did not have the qualities needed to be a preacher's wife. Soon, my husband was asked to work with the youth of the congregation where we worshipped. He accepted the work, and enjoyed it so much that two years later, he was hired to take a full-time work with a congregation in the same city. All of a sudden, I was a preacher's wife and, much to my surprise, I loved it! Our ideas about who we think we are and where we want to go can certainly change. Within three years I went from being a non-Christian to a preacher's wife.

As I "*press toward the prize*," I consider several goals as a Christian woman and preacher's wife. Obviously, my main goal is to obtain that glorious home in heaven and take as many souls with me as possible. In order to do this, I must strive to give my very best to God and the work of the church. There are three areas in which a Christian woman/preacher's wife must excel in order to be the very best she can be. She must be a soul-winner; she must be supportive of her husband; and she must be a faithful servant of God Almighty!

The need for the Christian woman to be a soul-winner is enormous! When a faithful Christian thinks about the billions of people in this world who are in a lost state, it brings pain to the heart. When one thinks about a preacher and his wife, one automatically sees the preacher as a soul-winner with little thought about the importance of his wife in this area. The preacher may travel across the sea, he may be busy conducting

Bible studies, and, of course, everyone sees him preaching each Lord’s day. The preacher’s wife, however, as a faithful Christian woman, has just as much responsibility to win souls as her husband does!

As a preacher’s wife, however, I will have many opportunities to teach others about Christ. This can be done by: (1) Having an attitude and disposition that is attractive to others. How many women do we know who are always negative about the church, their husbands, and children. Do these type of people make one desire to be what they are? If I want people to love the Lord and be attracted to His church, I must show them that there is joy found in Christ. (2) Appearance is another way I can teach others. If I expect my children, and others, to desire to dress their best when coming to worship, I must be willing to do so myself.

Further, the preacher’s wife has many opportunities to teach other people collectively. I have been able to teach many children in Bible class since becoming a Christian, and can influence young people for years to come if this task is taken seriously. A Christian woman can also take part in teaching other women in a ladies’ class, ladies’ days, and individually. My main goal as a soul-winning Christian woman, however, is to teach my children all that I can while I have them in my home! If I should succeed in every aspect that has been mentioned thus far, and fail to rear my children after the statutes of God, I have failed miserably! As my husband is working in his office, conducting Bible studies, visiting the members, traveling around the world, I will be the one with the children. If my children cannot see Jesus in my life, it will affect them forever.

I also see the need to be my husband’s biggest supporter as he labors to preach the word of God (II

Tim. 4:2). Webster's Dictionary defines support as: "*To promote the interests or cause of, or to uphold or defend as valid or right.*" As a gospel preacher, my husband is involved in the greatest cause that has ever been. I, as his wife, will either help make or break his effectiveness in this work. There will be many who may be overly critical about the cause in which we are involved, but I can uphold and defend my husband in the cause of Christ, helping to make him more effective.

Third, above all things, I need to be a faithful servant of Jesus Christ. Our Lord came to this earth to serve, and I should strive to do the same. Christian women can do a great deal to serve other people. As a preacher's wife, I will come into contact with many people who will have special needs. The following poem by M. Bentham-Edwards describes best my goals in this area.

God, make my life a little light,
 Within the world a glow;
A tiny flame that burneth bright
 Wherever I may go.

God make my life a little flower,
 That giveth joy to all,
Content to bloom in native bower,
 Although its place be small.

God make my life a little song,
 That comforteth the sad;
That helpeth others to be strong,
 And makes the singer glad.

God make my life a little staff,
 Whereon the weak may rest,
That so what health and strength I have
 May serve my neighbors best.

I have found that when I serve others, or go visit someone to make them happy, I always leave happier

than when I arrived.

The tasks of a Christian woman/preacher’s wife are numerous and strenuous at times. However, when my work seems difficult or frustrating, I try to imagine myself at the feet of Christ on judgment day. As I present my labors to Him, He says,

...Well done, thou good and faithful servant:
thou hast been faithful over a few things, I
will make thee ruler over many things: enter
thou into the joy of thy lord (Matt. 25:21).

This will cause me to carry on with the job set before me.

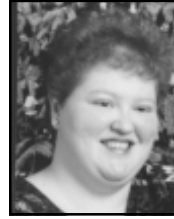
Chapter 26

My Goal As A Christian Woman And The Wife Of A Preacher Of The Gospel

• Philippians 3:14; 4:3 •

Tina Williams

Daughter of Rebecca and Aubert Sims (1965) in Newton, MS • 1983 graduate of Newton High School • Upon graduation from Memphis School of Preaching they will be working with the Cades Church in Bradford, TN • Married David Williams (1985) • Tina and David have one son (Matthew Thomas, age 6).



In life we set many goals for ourselves. When we are youngsters, we set our professional goals, such as becoming a doctor, fireman, teacher, or astronaut. Not being raised in a Christian home, my childhood goals certainly did not include being a preacher's wife. After growing up, and comparing those childhood goals to those that a Christian should seek, I realized that different goals needed to be set. Now I am very happy with the profession that I share with many women, that of being a Christian and a preacher's wife.

My ultimate goal now, like that of all Christians, is eternal life in Heaven. In reaching that goal, it is necessary that we also set earthly goals for ourselves. One of our goals must be to heed the words of Christ when He said, "...be thou faithful unto death, and I will give thee a crown of life" (Rev. 2:10). A preacher's wife

and family will go through many trying times: congregational problems, financial trouble, picking up and moving with hardly any notice, even unemployment. But without fail, the rewards far outweigh the trying times! What greater reward is there than to see someone baptized into Christ after long Bible studies? Who can place a price tag on the wonderful Christian friends made along the way? If we will try, we can turn many problems into valuable learning experiences that make life easier in years to come.

As Christians and as preacher’s wives, we should set goals for our Christian work. We need to study, teach our children, be a good companion and helper, and be involved in church work. Also, a Christian woman can and should conduct private Bible studies when given the opportunity. Notice what Paul wrote concerning two women, Phoebe and Priscilla, who must have had similar goals.

I commend unto you Phoebe our sister, which is a servant of the church which is at Cenchrea: That ye receive her in the Lord, as becometh saints, and that ye assist her in whatsoever business she hath need of you: for she hath been a succourer of many, and of myself also. Greet Priscilla and Aquila my helpers in Christ Jesus: Who have for my life laid down their own necks: unto whom not only I give thanks, but also all the churches of the Gentiles (Rom. 16:1-4).

We can also set goals for our role as a Christian wife. Paul wrote that the older women should,

...teach the young women to be sober, to love their husbands, to love their children, To be discreet, chaste, keepers at home, good,

obedient to their own husbands, that the word of God be not blasphemed (Titus 2:4-5).

There is an old line that says, “*Behind every good man is a good woman.*” That is usually very true, but I have also seen a bumper sticker that said, “*Behind every good man is a very tired woman.*” Our preaching husbands need so much love and support. We need always to be there for them with a smile and a hug.

There will be times when there may be no one else he can talk to about a situation but you. At times such as this, we are entrusted with a tremendous confidence that must never be betrayed. We need to be keenly aware that those who,

...learn to be idle, wandering about from house to house; and not only idle, but tattlers also and busybodies, speaking things which they ought not (I Tim. 5:13),

possess a character of those who “...*have cast off their first faith*” (I Tim. 5:12). May it never be said that these words describe us as Christians and as preacher’s wives!

We can set many goals for ourselves when we read about all the expressions and definitions of love (charity) that Paul gave to the Corinthians:

Though I speak with the tongues of men and of angels, and have not charity, I am become as sounding brass, or a tinkling cymbal. And though I have the gift of prophecy, and understand all mysteries, and all knowledge; and though I have all faith, so that I could remove mountains, and have not charity, I am nothing. And though I bestow all my goods to feed the poor, and though I give my body to be burned, and have not charity, it profiteth me nothing. Charity suffereth long, and is kind;

charity envieth not; charity vaunteth not itself, is not puffed up, Doth not behave itself unseemly, seeketh not her own, is not easily provoked, thinketh no evil; Rejoiceth not in iniquity, but rejoiceth in the truth; Beareth all things, believeth all things, hopeth all things, endureth all things. Charity never faileth: but whether there be prophecies, they shall fail; whether there be tongues, they shall cease; whether there be knowledge, it shall vanish away (I Cor. 13:1-8).

What fine examples of Christian women and preacher’s wives we could be if we set a goal to practice all these expressions concerning love!

As mothers, we set goals for ourselves. We even try to set our children’s goals! Timothy’s grandmother and mother, Lois and Eunice, are great examples of women who must have set their goal to teach him properly (II Tim. 1:5). We have such a big influence on our children. Carefulness is a must in every situation; the way that we talk, the way that we handle ourselves, the way that we dress, even in our facial expressions. All mothers know that children can pick up and remember even the smallest details!

Finally, we also have goals for our home. Isaiah asked Hezekiah, “...*What have they seen in thine house...*” (II Kings 20:15)? The Babylonians had seen all of Hezekiah’s treasures and defenses. What is seen in my home? My goal as a Christian and a preacher’s wife is that people will always see a strong home, full of love, dedicated to the Lord. I want them to see submission to Christ, concern for the lost and needy, forgiveness, good parents who discipline their children, and a husband and wife with love and respect for each other. These are my treasures for all to see.