

Philippians Devotionals

ASSORTED DEVOTIONALS RELATED TO PHILIPPIANS

Seeing God in Your Circumstances by Theodore Epp

Philippians 1: 12-21

The life of the indwelling Christ enabled Paul to be free from worry and self-care during his imprisonment, which could have led to death.

Paul was bold and unashamed and was concerned only that Christ would be magnified in his body regardless of what awaited him--life or death. There was no wavering on his part.

We tend to think that these tremendous qualities were true only of the great men of God, such as the Apostle Paul, but that it is impossible for us to attain them. Somehow Satan blinds our eyes to the fact that we can have the same determination to glorify Christ in our lives that Paul had in his.

The same Christ indwells us, not only to give us the desire to glorify Him but also to enable us to have the boldness to carry out that desire.

Having told of his desire to please Christ in everything, whether through life or through death, Paul said, "For to me to live is Christ, and to die is gain" (Phil. 1:21).

This was the basis for Paul's being able to live victoriously in Christ. He was not concerned about drawing attention to himself; rather, he wanted to glorify Jesus Christ in everything. All of Paul's life was focused on Jesus Christ.

It is good for each of us to weigh his or her activities and ask, "Are the things I am doing all done to further my own interests, or are they really glorifying Christ?"

"I have been crucified with Christ; and it is no longer I who live, but Christ lives in me; and the life which I now live in the flesh I live by faith in the Son of God, who loved me, and gave Himself up for me" (Gal. 2:20, NASB).

Phil 1:20

Being a Lens by Dr. Warren Wiersbe

Read Psalm 35:22-28

Each of us is a lens that magnifies what we live for. People can look at and through our lives and see what is really important to us. The athlete magnifies his sport, his team and his winning record. The musician magnifies the instrument he plays. The scholar magnifies his discipline. As God's people, we should magnify the Lord.

The sinner, however, wants to magnify only himself. David said, "Let them be ashamed and brought to mutual confusion who rejoice at my hurt; let them be clothed with shame and dishonor who magnify themselves against me" (v. 26). Notice the phrase "who magnify themselves against me." Whenever you live to magnify yourself, you are always against someone else. This means competition. And God doesn't want us to live competitively.

Our great desire should be to magnify the Lord, not ourselves. David said, "Let them shout for joy and be glad, who favor my righteous cause; and let them say continually, 'Let the Lord be magnified'" (v. 27). The Apostle Paul said, "Christ will be magnified in my body, whether by life or by death" (Phil. 1:20). Are you magnifying the Lord today? Can people listen to your words, look at your life, measure your actions and say, "She belongs to the Lord. He belongs to the Lord"? It's important that people see the Lord, not us.

The most important quality of a lens is cleanliness. When the lenses of my glasses get dirty, I see the dirt. So I have to clean them. When we are dirty, people see us rather than the Lord. Let's keep our lives clean today. Let's magnify the Lord together; He is worthy

of all praise.

Christians are on display before the world. What an opportunity and responsibility you have to impact others for Christ! If you love the Lord, you will want to magnify Him. Watch your words and actions. Are you living for Jesus? Keep the lens of your life clean so that He may be magnified through you.

Fashioned In The Fire by Mrs. Charles E. Cowman

"Unto you it is given . . .to suffer" (Phil. 1:29).

God keeps a costly school. Many of its lessons are spelled out through tears. Richard Baxter said, "O God, I thank Thee for a bodily discipline of eight and fifty years"; and he is not the only man who has turned a trouble into triumph.

This school of our Heavenly Father will soon close for us; the term time is shortening every day. Let us not shrink from a hard lesson or wince under any rod of chastisement. The richer will be the crown, and the sweeter will be Heaven, if we endure cheerfully to the end and graduate in glory.--Theodore L. Cuyler

The finest china in the world is burned at least three times, some of it more than three times. Dresden china is always burned three times. Why does it go through that intense fire? Once ought to be enough; twice ought to be enough. No, three times are necessary to burn that china so that the gold and the crimson are brought out more beautiful and then fastened there to stay.

We are fashioned after the same principle in human life. Our trials are burned into us once, twice, thrice; and by God's grace these beautiful colors are there and they are there to stay forever.--Cortland Myers

Earth's fairest flowers grow not on sunny plain,
But where some vast upheaval rent in twain The smiling land
After the whirlwinds devastating blast,
After the molten fire and ashen pall,
God's still small voice breathes healing over all.
From riven rocks and fern-clad chasms deep,
Flow living waters as from hearts that weep,
There in the afterglow soft dews distill
And angels tend God's plants when night falls still,
And the Beloved passing by that way
Will gather lilies at the break of day.--J.H.D.

DEVOTIONALS

PHILIPPIANS 2

Unity, Not Uniformity by Theodore Epp

Philippians 2:1-5; Psalm 133

The Christian life is not a stereotyped life composed of rules and regulations. It may involve rules and regulations, but the Christian life is essentially the presence of Christ in the believer.

This is why Paul said, "As you therefore have received Christ Jesus the Lord, so walk in Him, having been firmly rooted and now being built up in Him and established in your faith, just as you were instructed, and overflowing with gratitude. See to it that no one takes you captive through philosophy and empty deception, according to the tradition of men, according to the elementary principles of the world, rather than according to Christ. For in Him all the fulness of Deity dwells in bodily form, and in Him you have been made complete, and He is the head over all rule and authority" (Col. 2:6-10, NASB).

It should also be remembered that the minds of different believers are not to be pressed into a single mold of thinking--this is not what is meant by being "likeminded" (Phil. 2:2).

Rather, God imparts to us the matchless mastermind of Christ, so each believer will be a distinct person in himself.

Believers will be likeminded inasmuch as they will seek to reach similar goals, but they will not each seek the same way, and they

may not always agree as to how a particular goal can best be reached.

"Let us therefore follow after the things which make for peace, and things wherewith one may edify another" (Rom. 14:19).

Phil 2:2 Stars in a Dark World by Elisabeth Elliot

One of the letters the apostle Paul wrote from prison begs his friends to think and feel alike, to love, to have the "same turn of mind, and a common care for unity" (Phil 2:2 NEB). In such company there would be no room for rivalry or personal vanity. Each one would be thinking the others better, seeking to put their interests first.

Obedience, humility, cheerfulness ("Do all you have to do without complaint or wrangling") are rare in a warped and crooked world--nearly nonexistent, in fact, where each lives for his own ends. If a marriage counselor were to ask each partner, "What are your goals?" and the answer were "How can I best serve my husband or wife? What can I do to further his or her goals?" the counseling period would be over, the bill low. Any two people, any community of Christians who set themselves to look only to the other's interest would be a rare and radiant thing, shining, as Paul said, "like stars in a dark world" (Phil 2:15 NEB).

In that same sense, a Christian might well pray, "Lord, make me a star."

Living for Others by Phillips Brooks

"Look not every man on his own things, but every man also on the things of others" (Phil. 2:4).

The truth is, that we are our best when we try to be it not for ourselves alone, but for our brethren; and that we take God's gifts most completely for ourselves when we realize that He sends them to us for the benefit of other men, who stand beyond us needing them. I have spoken very feebly, unless you have felt something of the difference which it would make to all of us if this truth really took possession of us. It would make our struggles after a higher life so much more intense as they become more noble. "For their sakes I sanctify myself," said Jesus; and He hardly ever said words more wonderful than those. There was the power by which He was holy; the world was to be made holy, was to be sanctified through Him. I am sure that you or I could indeed be strengthened to meet some great experience of pain if we really believed that by our suffering we were to be made luminous with help to other men. They are to get from us painlessly what we have got most painfully from God. There is the power of the bravest martyrdom and the hardest work that the world has ever seen.

Phil 2:4 Concern for Others

Some people prefer not to know what's going on, because information might bring obligation. "What you don't know can't hurt you," says the old adage; but is it true? In a letter to a Mrs. Foote, Mark Twain wrote, "All you need in this life is ignorance and confidence; then success is sure." But what we don't know could hurt us a great deal! There are people in the cemetery who chose not to know the truth. The slogan for the 1987 AIDS publicity campaign was "Don't die of ignorance"; and that slogan can be applied to many areas of life besides health.

Nehemiah asked about Jerusalem and the Jews living there because he had a caring heart. When we truly care about people, we want the facts, no matter how painful they may be. "Practical politics consists in ignoring facts," American historian Henry Adams said; but Aldous Huxley said, "Facts do not cease to exist because they are ignored." Closing our eyes and ears to the truth could be the first step toward tragedy for ourselves as well as for others.

Are we like Nehemiah, anxious to know the truth even about the worst situations? Is our interest born of concern or idle curiosity? When we read missionary prayer letters, the news in religious periodicals, or even our church's ministry reports, do we want the facts, and do the facts burden us? Are we the kind of people who care enough to ask?

Think about it: "Each of you should look not only to your own interests, but also to the interests of others" (Phil. 2:4, niv).

Read: Nehemiah 1

Action assignment: Do you know someone who is experiencing hardships? Until now you haven't done much more than pray for that person. Talk to God about the matter. Determine to do something for that person. Even a phone call is a starter.

His Character by Andrew Murray

"Let this mind be in you, which was also in Christ Jesus" (Phil. 2:5).

In this view it is of inconceivable importance that we should have right thoughts of what Christ is, of what really constitutes Him the

Christ, and specialty of what may be counted His chief characteristic, the root and essence of all His character as our Redeemer. There can be but one answer: it is His humility. What is the incarnation but His heavenly humility, His emptying Himself and becoming man? What is His life on earth but humility; His taking the form of a servant? And what is His atonement but humility! 'He humbled Himself and became obedient unto death.' And what is His ascension and His glory, but humility exalted to the throne and crowned with glory? 'He humbled Himself, therefore God highly exalted Him.' In heaven, where He was with the Father, in His birth, in His life, in His death, in His sitting on the throne, it is all, it is nothing but humility. Christ is the humility of God embodied in human nature; the Eternal Love humbling itself, clothing itself in the garb of meekness and gentleness, to win and serve and save us. As the love and condescension of God makes Him the benefactor and helper and servant of all, so Jesus of necessity was the Incarnate Humility. And so He is still in the midst of the throne, the meek and lowly Lamb of God.

Christ, the Great Example by Theodore Epp

Philippians 2:5-11

It is apparent that there was some element of Jesus' equality with God that He was willing to set aside during His earthly ministry.

One cannot give up the qualities of his inner nature, but he can relinquish the right, in some respects, to outwardly express his inner nature.

Even though Christ was God Himself and had the right to display His attributes, He willingly gave up this right in order to come to earth to be the Saviour of the world.

He did not cease being in the form of God as to His inner nature, but He gave up being equal with God as far as the expression of some of His attributes was concerned.

Remember that the Father did not humble Jesus Christ; He humbled Himself. There is a vast difference between being humiliated and willingly humbling oneself.

Jesus Christ voluntarily took a lower position because of His love for us. And this is the same kind of attitude that should characterize those of us who know Jesus Christ as Saviour.

The Bible has much to say about both pride and humility. James 4:6,10 says, "But He gives a greater grace. Therefore it says, 'God is opposed to the proud, but gives grace to the humble.' . . . Humble yourselves in the presence of the Lord, and He will exalt you" (NASB).

First Peter 5:6 says, "Humble yourselves in the presence of the Lord, and He will exalt you." (NASB). Matthew 23:12 says, "Whoever exalts himself shall be humbled; and whoever humbles himself shall be exalted" (NASB).

"Let nothing be done through strife or vainglory; but in lowliness of mind let each esteem other better than themselves" (Phil. 2:3).

Death is a Gateway to the Palace by Elisabeth Elliot

Phil 2:5-8

To be a Christian is to be a subject--subject to a king--that is, to welcome the rule of God in one's life. Jesus Himself became subject to the Father--"Lo, I come to do Thy will, O God" (Heb 10:7 AV). This meant that He had come to this world, not to gain, but to lose; not to get, but to give; not to be served, but to serve; not to obtain bread but to be bread, the Bread of heaven, broken for the life of the world.

"Let this mind be in you which was also in Christ Jesus...He humbled Himself" (Phil 2:5-8 AV).

That puts it in very simple terms. If you want to be a Christian, see that your mind is made up as his was: be humble, be subject, be obedient--even to death. It will mean death. Be sure of that. Death to some of your desires and plans at least. Death to yourself. But never forget--Jesus' death was what opened the way for his own exaltation and our everlasting Life. Our death to selfishness is the shining gateway into the glories of the palace of the King. Is it so hard to be his subject? Is the price too high?

A Chance to Die by Elisabeth Elliot

Phil 2:7

To be transformed into the image of Christ I must learn his character, love his obedience to the will of the Father, and begin, step by step, to walk the same pathway. For Christ the pathway of obedience began with emptying Himself. I must begin at the same place.

He "made Himself nothing." (Phil 2:7 NEB)

"You must arm yourselves with a temper of mind like His." (I Pt 4:1 NEB)

"If anyone wishes to be a follower of mine, he must leave self behind." (Mt 16:24 NEB)

What does this mean? Is it mere words? How can one leave self behind, make himself nothing? The answer will not come in a vacuum. If a man or woman honestly wishes to be a follower, the opportunity will present itself. Christ will say, "Here is your chance. Now, in this situation, you must make your choice. Will it be self? Or will you choose Me?"

An older missionary said something to Amy Carmichael when she was a young missionary that stayed with her for life. She had spoken of something which was not to her liking. His reply was, "See in it a chance to die."

What a Name! by Warren Wiersbe

Phil 2:9 Read Psalm 72:12-20

"His name shall endure forever; His name shall continue as long as the sun. And men shall be blessed in Him; all nations shall call Him blessed" (v. 17). Originally, that was written about Solomon. But as we read this verse, we see that it also refers to Jesus.

It speaks of His name. "You shall call His name Jesus, for He will save His people from their sins" (Matt. 1:21). That's what His name means--Savior. What kind of a name is it? It is enduring: "His name shall endure forever" (v. 17). I'm a student of biography. When I go to used-book sales, I buy books about old people--old preachers, missionaries and statesmen--folks who have been forgotten. Have you ever read an old edition of an encyclopedia and thought, Who are these people? I've never heard of them. Their names did not endure. In fact, some of the names in the headlines today will be forgotten a few months from now. But not so with Jesus. He has the enduring name, a name that "is above every name" (Phil. 2:9).

Jesus also has an enriching name. "Men shall be blessed in Him." The names of some people don't bring blessing--they bring cursing. You certainly wouldn't call your son "Judas" or your daughter "Jezebel." But Jesus has an enriching name. It brings blessing. We have been blessed in Him "with every spiritual blessing" (Eph. 1:3).

His name also is an enabling name. "Blessed be the Lord God, the God of Israel, who only does wondrous things!" (v. 18). God enables us, through the name of Jesus, to do wonderful things. In the Book of Acts we find the name of Jesus on the lips of the apostles. "In the name of Jesus Christ of Nazareth rise up and walk" (3:6). What a privilege it is to know His name. What a privilege it is to have the authority of His name as we pray and serve Him.

* * *

There is no other name like Jesus. It is full of power and authority. It is enduring and brings blessing and enablement to those who know His name. Do you know Jesus as your Savior? "Whoever calls on the name of the Lord shall be saved" (Rom. 10:13).

Hidden Work by Elisabeth Elliot

Phil 2:12-14

Few of us accomplish without delay or interruption what we set out to accomplish. Plans are made, and they fail. We dream dreams, and they are not fulfilled. Even what seem to be soberly realistic schedules are interrupted by unforeseen demands. Often we are tempted to quit our efforts altogether, to take a careless attitude, or to give in to helplessness, despair, and frustration.

When the apostle Paul's itinerant ministry was brought to a standstill by his imprisonment in Rome, he had plenty of human reasons for giving up. He wrote to the Christians at Philippi, who themselves were suffering persecution, reminding them of the humble obedience of Christ. "You too, my friends, must be obedient, as always.... You must work out your own salvation in fear and trembling; for it is God who works in you, inspiring both the will and the deed, for his own chosen purpose. Do all you have to do without complaint or wrangling" (Phil 2:12-14 NEB).

Imprisonments, persecutions, late planes, an attack of the flu, an uninvited guest, or an unpleasant confrontation--never mind. Be obedient as always! Such a simple directive. So hard to carry out--unless we also remember that we are not by any means alone in our effort. God also is at work in us, always accomplishing what we could not accomplish if left to ourselves: his own chosen purpose.

Display According to Circumstances by John Ker

"... work out your own salvation with fear and trembling" (Phil. 2:12).

The Pharisees were rebuked for making their religion public. Daniel would have sinned had he made his private. So different is duty when religion is popular or unpopular. Sometimes a man has no religion if he does not show it; sometimes very little if he obtrudes it. One thing we must always show the fruits in the life.

There are things in religion not for common talk, which a delicate mind will no more thrust in than it will its heart's deepest affections. David says, "Come near all ye that fear God: I will tell what He hath done for my soul." Those that "fear God" are invited, and they must "come near."

Our Saviour was thirty years in the world before He said much in it, as far as we know. Then He spoke "as one having authority." He bade some of the healed speak, others to be silent, as suited character and circumstance. He kept silence on occasions--when the Syro-Phoenician woman cried after Him, when His accusers testified against Him. There are many seasons for silence as well as for speech.

Self-Made Man by J. Stuart Holden

"For it is God which worketh in you both to will and to do of his good pleasure"

(Phil. 2:13).

For, in the truest sense of that frequently misused term, every Christian believer is a self-made man. That description is, I know, usually applied to a man who has made a fortune and has in many cases been so busy over the making of it that he has never thought of making himself. He has made money but has all the time been letting his money make him or rather unmake him. Most often when so applied it points to an example which is a terrible warning. But in an entirely different sense from its common misuse in this connection the Christian believer is a self-made man. He chooses his Model because he is aware that his Model has first chosen him. And he humbly, resolutely and prayerfully determines the degree of fidelity with which he pursues its living lineaments. His soul is continually in his hand. Which is not to say that he is always thinking of his soul. That would be quite as injurious, and quite as complete a denial of his Christian faith, as always to be thinking of his body. No! His hand has to work at the tasks it finds to do, tasks that often seem to have no relation whatever to his spiritual aims and hopes, tasks that in themselves may be altogether uncongenial and yield not the slightest satisfaction beyond their economic value--or rather recompense, tasks that promise nothing beyond the inexorable necessity of their own endless repetition. For such are many of the tasks of modern industry. Yet all the time, while engaged upon them, the Christian man is actually fashioning himself. From this supreme task, in which all others are embraced, which is in point of fact carried out through them, he has no discharge.

Futile Attempts by Henry Drummond

"For it is God which worketh in you both to will and to do of his good pleasure" (Phil. 2:13).

One of the futile methods of sanctifying ourselves is trying; effort--struggle--agonizing. I suppose you have all tried that, and I appeal to your own life when I ask if it has not failed. Crossing the Atlantic, the Etruria, in which I was sailing, suddenly stopped in mid-ocean--something had broken down. There were a thousand people on board that ship. Do you think we could have made it go if we had all gathered together and pushed against the sides or against the masts? When a man hopes to sanctify himself by trying, he is like a man trying to make the boat go that carries him by pushing it--he is like a man drowning in the water and trying to save himself by pulling the hair of his own head. It is impossible. Christ held up the mode of sanctification almost to ridicule when He said: "Which of you by taking thought can add a cubit to his stature?" Put down that method forever as futile.

Another man says: "That is not my way. I have given up that. Trying has its place, but that is not where it comes in. My method is to concentrate on some single sin, and to work away upon that until I have got rid of it." Now, in the first place, life is too short for that process to succeed. Their name is legion. In the second place, that leaves the rest of the nature for a long time untouched. In the third place, it does not touch the seed or root of the disease. If you dam up a stream at one place, it will simply overflow higher up. And for a fourth reason: Religion does not consist in negatives--in stopping this sin and stopping that sin.

MY COMMENT - Drummond is not advocating "Let go and Let God" for that too is futile and not Biblical. Paul's pattern in Php 2:12-13 is crystal clear - believers are to work out (Php 2:12) what God (by His Spirit) works in (Php 2:13). That is the Biblical way of [progressive sanctification](#) beloved! See following devotional by Epp.

Balanced-and Blessed! by Theodore Epp

Philippians 2:12-14; Jeremiah 6:9-15

Every Christian needs to work out his salvation with a tender conscience and a watchfulness against temptations, trials or testings, shrinking from whatever might offend God or discredit His name.

Each of us needs to seriously consider whether or not there is something in our lives that is discrediting the name and Person of Christ. When we realize what He has done for us, we ought to tremble as we stand in the presence of a holy, righteous, almighty God.

Not only do we stand in His presence now, but we will also stand in His presence when we give account at the Judgment Seat of Christ.

When others view our lives today, what do they see? What do they talk about? We should be constantly apprehensive of the deceitfulness of the flesh.

Jeremiah 17:9,10 says, "The heart is more deceitful than all else and is desperately sick; who can understand it? I, the LORD, search the heart, I test the mind, even to give to each man according to his ways, according to the results of his deeds" (NASB).

We need to develop a watchfulness in regard to the power in our corruption.

In all of this a perfect balance is kept--God gives the divine enablement; we provide the human responsibility. We are not to be totally passive, for after God works in us, we are to work it out through our lives.

"And herein do I exercise myself, to have always a conscience void of offence toward God, and toward men" (Acts 24:16).

The Word Is Central by Theodore Epp

Philippians 2:15,16; Psalm 119:9-16

Never forget the centrality of the Word of God to the believer's witness. The Christian is to study the Word, apply it to himself and then translate it into daily living before a crooked and perverse world.

And every believer may be assured that as God's Word is held forth it will have an effect on those who hear it.

Hebrews 4:12 says, "For the word of God is living and active and sharper than any two-edged sword, and piercing as far as the division of soul and spirit, of both joints and marrow, and able to judge the thoughts and intentions of the heart" (NASB).

There is no substitute for holding forth God's Word, for if people are to come into right relationship with Jesus Christ, they must know what God's Word says.

Romans 10:17 says, "Faith comes from hearing, and hearing by the word of Christ" (NASB). So if those we witness to are to be able to have faith in Christ, they must have the Word of God presented to them.

We must first benefit from the Word ourselves before we become concerned about passing it on to others. We cannot do the work of God or have the right attitudes (as urged in the previous verses) unless God's Word is doing its work within us.

The Word of God goes to the deepest parts of our nature. It exposes, sifts, analyzes and judges even our thoughts (see Heb. 4:12).

"The law of the Lord is perfect, converting the soul: the testimony of the Lord is sure, making wise the simple" (Ps. 19:7).

DEVOTIONALS

PHILIPPIANS 3

A Safeguard for the Soul by Elisabeth Elliot

Phil 3:1

Souls are vulnerable things. They need safeguards. It was when Paul was in prison that this idea came to him. He had just been writing to the Philippians about the benefits that accrued because of his own sufferings and the possible death he might die. He told them of Epaphroditus' illness and anxiety, and finished with "In conclusion, my brothers, delight yourselves in the Lord!...You will find it a great safeguard to your souls" (Phil 3:1 JBP).

It would be very easy to allow depression and anxiety to overcome us when we look at the dismal circumstances in which we sometimes find ourselves. Who had better reason than Paul for depression? ("Oh well, but he was Saint Paul!" we counter.) He had learned by practice how to apply the soul's safeguard, which is not mere enjoyment. It is delight. This is a command and therefore an act of will, and it is done in the Lord. No circumstance is so dismal as to prevent obedience to the command. No trouble can blast that safeguard. Do it. Do it by faith. Delight yourself in the Lord. Maybe you will have to get out of bed, get up from your chair, go outdoors and walk, sing a song out loud, bake a pie for somebody, or mow the lawn as an offering of praise. You can do something

which will help you to obey that command. It is amazing how strongly what we do affects how we feel.

Evidence of Separation by Theodore Epp

Phil 3:3, Joshua 5:1-15

As far as Israel was concerned, there was no inheritance possible to them until they were circumcised. This was clearly stated in Genesis 17 where the covenant concerning the land was given. So now, as the nation stood at the edge of Canaan, it was necessary that they follow through on the sign of separation, which for them was circumcision. This was the sign God made with Abraham, and it was to be continued by his posterity.

The people renewed their separation through circumcision and also renewed their relationship by celebrating the Passover. Egypt with its bondage was behind them; the desert wanderings were over; Jordan, the place of decision, was crossed; and the nation was now ready to conquer Canaan. A new kind of food was necessary as Israel went against her enemies and took possession of the country.

Joshua soon discovered that he was face to face with the Captain of the Lord's hosts, the commander of the Lord's armies. Here was the Warrior and Leader, coming not to help but to take charge.

The Captain of the Lord's hosts came not only to direct the armies of Israel but also to fight for Israel and with Israel and through Israel. This is the same truth as is taught in Ephesians 6:10 where we are told to "be strong in the Lord, and in the power of his might."

"For we are the circumcision, which worship God in the spirit, and rejoice in Christ Jesus, and have no confidence in the flesh" (Phil. 3:3).

Zeal Without Knowledge by Theodore Epp

Philippians 3:1-11

Paul said about himself, "Concerning zeal, persecuting the church" (Phil. 3:6). This reveals the pride of personal devotion to his religious choices. In a sense, it was Paul's pride of reputation. He was more devoted than any of his contemporaries.

He was not only a Pharisee, but he was also a very zealous one. He was a conscientious and relentless persecutor of all who were considered heretics outside of his pharisaic Judaism.

In Paul's unsaved state in Judaism, he actually thought he was doing the will of God by persecuting the believers in Jesus Christ. He measured his religion by his hatred for Christians.

It is regrettable that even today some believers measure their Christian zeal by what they are against.

Some have so much bitterness against modernists--those with liberal theology; others contend zealously over the issue of the Holy Spirit or over a particular translation of the Bible.

Some have bitterness toward sinners, not distinguishing the sin from the sinner. But remember, a reputation of zeal against anything is not a proof of salvation in itself.

I believe that when we are rightly related to Jesus Christ, we will have much zeal against those things that dishonor Him, but it is possible for people to be zealous against some things without having a right relationship with Christ.

"Who gave himself for us, that he might redeem us from all iniquity, and purify unto himself a peculiar people, zealous of good works" (Titus 2:14).

Heart's Sacrifice by Mrs. Charles E. Cowman

"But what things were gain to me, those I counted loss for Christ" (Phil. 3:7).

When they buried the blind preacher, George Matheson, they lined his grave with red roses in memory of his love-life of sacrifice. And it was this man, so beautifully and significantly honored, who wrote,

"O Love that wilt not let me go,
I rest my weary soul in Thee,
I give Thee back the life I owe,
That in thine ocean depths its flow
May richer, fuller be.

"O Light that followest all my way,
I yield my flickering torch to Thee,
My heart restores its borrowed ray,
That in Thy sunshine's blaze its day
May brighter, fairer be.

"O Joy that seekest me through pain,
I cannot close my heart to Thee,
I trace the rainbow through the rain,
And feel the promise is not vain,
That morn shalt tearless be.

"O Cross that liftest up my head,
I dare not ask to fly from Thee,
I lay in dust life's glory dead,
And from the ground there blossoms red,
Life that shall endless be."

There is a legend of an artist who had found the secret of a wonderful red which no other artist could imitate. The secret of his color died with him. But after his death an old wound was discovered over his heart. This revealed the source of the matchless hue in his pictures. The legend teaches that no great achievement can be made, no lofty attainment reached, nothing of much value to the world done, save at the cost of heart's blood.

Costly Glory from Streams in the Desert :

Phil 3:8

"I even reckon all things as pure loss because of the priceless privilege of knowing Christ Jesus my Lord" (Phil. 3:8; Weymouth).

Shining is always costly. Light comes only at the cost of that which produces it. An unlit candle does no shining. Burning must come before shining. We cannot be of great use to others without cost to ourselves. Burning suggests suffering. We shrink from pain.

We are apt to feel that we are doing the greatest good in the world when we are strong, and able for active duty, and when the heart and hands are full of kindly service.

When we are called aside and can only suffer; when we are sick; when we are consumed with pain; when all our activities have been dropped, we feel that we are no longer of use, that we are not doing anything.

But, if we are patient and submissive, it is almost certain that we are a greater blessing to the world in our time of suffering and pain than we were in the days when we thought we were doing the most of our work. We are burning now, and shining because we are burning. --Evening Thoughts

"The glory of tomorrow is rooted in the drudgery of today."

Many want the glory without the cross, the shining without the burning, but crucifixion comes before coronation.

Have you heard the tale of the aloe plant,
Away in the sunny clime?
By humble growth of a hundred years
It reaches its blooming time;
And then a wondrous bud at its crown
Breaks into a thousand flowers;
This floral queen, in its blooming seen,
Is the pride of the tropical bowers,
But the plant to the flower is sacrifice,
For it blooms but once, and it dies.

Have you further heard of the aloe plant,

That grows in the sunny clime;
How every one of its thousand flowers,
As they drop in the blooming time,
Is an infant plant that fastens its roots
In the place where it falls on the ground,
And as fast as they drop from the dying stem,
Grow lively and lovely around?
By dying, it liveth a thousand-fold
In the young that spring from the death of the old.

Have you heard the tale of the pelican,
The Arabs' Gimel el Bahr,
That lives in the African solitudes,
Where the birds that live lonely are?
Have you heard how it loves its tender young,
And cares and toils for their good,
It brings them water from mountain far,
And fishes the seas for their food.
In famine it feeds them--what love can devise!
The blood of its bosom--and, feeding them, dies.

Have you heard this tale--the best of them all--
The tale of the Holy and True,
He dies, but His life, in untold souls
Lives on in the world anew;
His seed prevails, and is filling the earth,
As the stars fill the sky above.
He taught us to yield up the love of life,
For the sake of the life of love.
His death is our life, His loss is our gain;
The joy for the tear, the peace for the pain.
--Selected

Counting the Cost by Mrs. Charles E. Cowman

"I count all things but loss for the excellency of the knowledge of Christ Jesus, my Lord" (Phil. 3:8).

This is the happy season of ripening cornfields, of the merry song of the reapers, of the secured and garnered grain. But let me hearken to the sermon of the field. This is its solemn word to me. You must die in order to live. You must refuse to consult your own case and well-being. You must be crucified, not only in desires and habits which are sinful, but in many more which appear innocent and right.

If you would save others, you cannot save yourself. If you would bear much fruit, you must be buried in darkness and solitude.

My heart fails me as I listen. But, when Jesus asks it, let me tell myself that it is my high dignity to enter into the fellowship of His sufferings; and thus I am in the best of company. And let me tell myself again that it is all meant to make me a vessel meet for His use. His own Calvary has blossomed into fertility; and so shall mine. Plenty out of pain, life out of death: is it not the law of the Kingdom? --In the Hour of Silence

Do we call it dying when the bud bursts into flower? --Selected

"Finding, following, keeping, struggling,
Is He sure to bless?
Saints, apostles, prophets, martyrs,
Answer, 'Yes.'"

The Fellowship of Christ's Sufferings by G. C. Morgan

"That I may know him...and the fellowship of his sufferings..."

(Phil. 3:10).

Do not miss the blessedness of the fact that the fellowship of His sufferings means that He has fellowship with us. When I enter into the fellowship of His sufferings I am not alone, for He is forever with me. I can endure no pain for Him that He does not share with me. When I stand in the presence of sin and suffer--if I have climbed high enough, in that moment He is with me, He is feeling the same pain, He is suffering with me. When my heart is moved with hot anger because God is misunderstood, He is suffering with me. My fellowship with Him means His fellowship with me. When through pity born of His love my heart breaks over the awful punishment that is falling on the head of the sinner, never let Satan suggest I have reached a higher level than the Lord, for He is having fellowship with me, my pity is born of His pity, and His love is suffering with my love.

Paradox of Christianity which no man can explain--there is no joy like the fellowship of His suffering! What is the sense of sin that causes you pain, dear child of God? It is the outcome of purity. The measure of purity is the measure of suffering in the presence of sin. In the infinite mystery of pain there is the deeper heart and core of holy joy. What is that suffering of your heart in the presence of misunderstanding of God? It is born of your perfect satisfaction in God. Why are you angry when that man libels God? Because you know Him. Your hot pain and great sorrow come out of the quiet rest of intimate knowledge. What is that pity for the sinner that throbs through your soul, fills your eyes, breaks your heart? It is the outcome of the love of God shed abroad in your heart.

Being in His Presence by David Martyn Lloyd-Jones

"That I may know him..." (Phil. 3:10).

Do you know God? I am not asking whether you believe things about Him; but have you met Him? Have you known yourself for certain in His presence? Does He speak to you, and do you know that you speak to Him? 'The Practice of the Presence of God' by Brother Lawrence tells us that this is possible in the kitchen while you are washing the dishes, and performing the most menial tasks. It matters not where you are as long as you know that this is possible, that Christ died to make it possible. He died 'to bring us to God', and to this knowledge. Is your fellowship 'with the Father and with his Son Jesus Christ'? O that we might know God! Begin to cry with Job, 'Oh, that I knew where I might find him', and you will soon find yourself desiring, hungering to know Him. The most vital question to ask about all who claim to be Christian is this: Have they a soul thirst for God? Do they long for this? Is there something about them that tells you that they are always waiting for His next manifestation of Himself? Is their life centered on Him? Can they say with Paul that they forget everything in the past? Do they press forward more and more that they might know Him and that the knowledge might increase, until eventually beyond death and the grave they may bask eternally in 'the sunshine of His face?' That I might know him!

Phil 3:13

Spiritual Memory by Dr. Warren Wiersbe

Read Psalm 105:5-15

Your spiritual memory is vital to your spiritual health. Do you remember what God wants you to remember? Are you grateful for what He remembers? "Remember His marvelous works which He has done, His wonders, and the judgments of His mouth.... He has remembered His covenant forever, the word which He commanded, for a thousand generations" (vv. 5,8).

We should remember God's words, His wonders and His works, but we often forget. How easy it was for the Israelites to forget what God had done for them. Each year they celebrated the Passover, and one reason for that celebration was to remind them that God had delivered them out of slavery in Egypt. Some things we ought to forget, such as "those things which are behind" (Phil. 3:13). But the psalmist tells us to "remember His marvelous works" (v. 5). Are you remembering God's blessings? The next time you are tempted to criticize or get angry with God, just remember His marvelous works.

God also remembers: "He has remembered His covenant forever" (v. 8). He deals with us on the basis of His covenant promises, not on the basis of the Law, and He has sealed that covenant with the blood of His Son.

Finally, don't forget that His promises never fail. Not one word of all of God's promises has failed. Even when we forget, He remembers. Even when we neglect God's Word, He remembers it. God keeps His promises. He is faithful and will never lie.

* * *

Claim a promise from God's Word that especially encourages you today. As you remember that promise, remember also that God is ever faithful to keep His promises.

Does Christ Feel at Home in Your Heart? by Theodore Epp

Ephesians 3:14-17, Phil 3:10

Paul referred to his relationship to the indwelling Christ when he wrote: "I am [have been] crucified with Christ: nevertheless I live;

yet not I, but Christ liveth in me" (Gal. 2:20).

Thus, as Paul prayed for the Ephesians, he prayed that Christ might dwell in their hearts in the sense of being enthroned in their lives--that He might be truly at home, not just a guest.

He will be completely at home in our lives to the extent that He is truly Lord of our lives. When we received Him as Saviour, He came to permanently indwell us, but our need now is to put Him first in everything so that He will be at home in us.

When we come to this point, our desire will be the same as Paul's when he said, "That I may know him, and the power of his resurrection, and the fellowship of his sufferings, being made conformable unto his death" (Phil. 3:10).

Notice that the place of Christ's dwelling is "in your hearts" (Eph. 3:17). Christ dwells in the inner man and desires to control the person He indwells.

Of course, Christ indwells every person who receives Him as Saviour, but this does not necessarily mean He is in control of the person's life.

In order for Christ to control our lives, we must give up the self-life--we must desire to please Him rather than ourselves. This means we will have to say no to our own desires when they conflict with His.

We will have victory in our lives only as we submit ourselves to the Lord and by faith live in dependence on Him. We must not underestimate the importance of denying ourselves when our desires conflict with His.

Jesus said, "If any man will come after me, let him deny himself, and take up his cross daily, and follow me. For whosoever will save his life shall lose it: but whosoever will lose his life for my sake, the same shall save it" (Luke 9:23,24).

"Behold, I stand at the door, and knock: if any man hear my voice, and open the door, I will come in to him, and will sup with him, and he with me" (Rev. 3:20).

Desiring to Know God Better by Theodore Epp

Phil 3:10, Exodus 33:12-23

Having succeeded in receiving several answers to his prayers, Moses then evidenced his greatest boldness in what he requested of God. Moses said, "I beseech thee, shew me thy glory" (Ex. 33:18).

Moses had been so encouraged by God's answers to his prayers that he sought for the ultimate. The one desire that burned within Moses was to know God better. There is a tremendous need for each believer to have this same desire.

God is spirit, so no one is actually able to see Him. If a person could see God, he would be unable to stand the awesomeness of His glory. Thus, even Moses was able to see God only by what He is and by what He does.

In effect, God was telling Moses, "I can't show you My face, because if I did, you would not live. But I will show you My goodness, which reveals who I am and what I do." God was going to reveal Himself to Moses by showing His grace and mercy to him.

As the believer walks in close communion with God, there is always the desire to know Him better. If this is not the desire of the believer, something is seriously lacking in his spiritual life.

"That I may know him, and the power of his resurrection, and the fellowship of his sufferings, being made conformable unto his death" (Phil. 3:10).

No Comforters by Dr. Warren Wiersbe

Read Psalm 69:13-21 Phil 3:10

"Reproach has broken my heart, and I am full of heaviness; I looked for someone to take pity, but there was none; and for comforters, but I found none" (v. 20). When we read Psalm 69, we meet Jesus Christ, for many verses from this psalm are quoted in the New Testament, relating to Him. For example, "I have become a stranger to my brothers, an alien to my mother's children; because zeal for Your house has eaten me up, and the reproaches of those who reproach You have fallen on me" (Psalm 69:8,9; John 2:17). David is going through difficulty, and it is making him more like Jesus. Therefore, it enabled him to reveal the Lord to us. What breaks your heart? Is it broken when you can't have your way? Is it broken when something is taken away from you? Jesus

and David both said, "Reproach has broken my heart" (Psalm 69:20). What can you do about a broken heart? David prayed, "Deliver me. Hear me. Draw near to my soul. Redeem me" (Psalm 69:14,16,18). And God answered him.

Sometimes you bear reproach because of others. You feel heavy, brokenhearted and alone. But Jesus went through all of this for us. Be thankful that you can share in the fellowship of His sufferings (Phil. 3:10). Also, while others are going through this experience, be an encouragement to them. If you've known what it's like to have a broken heart, and if you've looked for someone to take pity, then you know how much it means to have a friend. Today, find someone with a broken heart and start to bring healing to him.

* * *

When your heart is broken, be encouraged that Jesus knows what you are going through and that you are becoming like Him. But there's another purpose: You can help others whose hearts are broken. God will use you to help bring healing to them. Don't waste your experiences; they have great value.

Dealing With Your Past by Theodore Epp

Philippians 3:12-14; 1 Timothy 1:12-17

We can do nothing about the past except make necessary confession. And when confession is made, the Bible promises: "If we confess our sins, he is faithful and just to forgive us our sins, and to cleanse us from all unrighteousness" (1 John 1:9).

By confession, sin is placed under the cleansing blood of the Lord Jesus Christ, and when it is under the blood, it does not condemn any longer.

Unless the past is dealt with, one is not prepared to live in the present nor to go on into the future. Unless the past is dealt with, it becomes a haunting memory that saps the strength of the believer so he is unable to honor Christ in his daily life.

What God does with sin when it is confessed is explained in various passages. Isaiah 44:22 says, "I have wiped out your transgressions like a thick cloud, and your sins like a heavy mist. Return to Me, for I have redeemed you" (NASB).

Hebrews 8:12 says, "FOR I WILL BE MERCIFUL TO THEIR INIQUITIES, AND I WILL REMEMBER THEIR SINS NO MORE" (NASB).

Someone has said, "The present must forget the past by correction, or else the past will become a moral and spiritual liability for the future."

Consider some items that need to be forgotten: failures--they keep our faith from advancing; successes--they create pride (see Prov. 16:18); losses--they drag us down so we cannot serve the Lord the way we should; grievances--they produce false attitudes (see 1 Cor. 13:6); sorrows--God can heal all heartaches; discouragements--we need to remember Christ, not disappointments, thwarted hopes and plans.

"And their sins and iniquities will I remember no more" (Heb. 10:17).

Regrets by Elisabeth Elliot

Phil 3:13-14

When my father was twelve years old he lost his left eye through disobedience. He had been forbidden to have firecrackers, but he sneaked out early in the morning of July 4, 1910, and, with the help of a neighboring farmer, set off some dynamite caps. A piece of copper penetrated his eye.

Four years later my grandfather wrote this letter to my grand-mother:

Dearest:

I am not one bit surprised that after all our experiences of the past four years you should suffer from sad memories, but I really do not believe for a moment that you should feel you have any occasion to let remorse bite into your life on account of Philip's accident. Surely we cannot guard against all the contingencies of this complex life, and no one who has poured out life as you have for each one of your children should let such regrets take hold.

None of us could be alive to the pressing needs of today if we should carry along with us the dark heaviness of any past, whether real or imagined. I know, dearest, that your Lord cannot wish anything of that sort for you, and I believe your steady, shining, and triumphant faith will lead you out through Him, into the richest experiences you have ever had. I believe that firmly.

I have had to turn to Him in helplessness today to overcome depression because of my failures. My Sunday School fiasco at Swarthmore bears down pretty hard. But that is not right. I must look ahead, and up, as you often tell me, and I will. I know how

sickening remorse is, if anyone knows; yet I also know, as you do, the lift and relief of turning the whole matter over to Him. We must have more prayers and more study together, dearest. I haven't followed the impulses I have so often had in this.

Lovingly, your own Phil.

My grandfather was the most cheerful and serene man I knew in my childhood. It is hard for me to imagine his having had any cause for remorse or temptation to depression. This letter, which bears a two-cent stamp and a Philadelphia postmark, was sent to Grandma in Franconia, New Hampshire, where they had a lovely vacation house. I spent my childhood summers in that house. I can picture her sitting on the porch, perhaps on the anniversary of her son's accident, looking out toward Mounts Lafayette, Bald, and Cannon, wrestling with the terrible thoughts of her own carelessness and failure. I thank God for my heritage. I thank Him for the word of His faithful servant Paul: "I concentrate on this: I leave the past behind and with hands outstretched to whatever lies ahead, I go straight for the goal--my reward the honor of being called by God in Christ" (Philippians 3:13, 14, PHILLIPS).

Becoming Spiritually Aggressive by Theodore Epp

Phil 3:14

1 Corinthians 9:24-27; Hebrews 12:1-4

Canaan, the Promised Land for the Israelites, is not a type of heaven as some have thought and as some hymns portray it.

Rather it is a type of the Christian's battle against sin and his victory over it as he seeks to live for the Lord. Canaan was a scene of conflict, not of complete peace and rest as heaven will be.

The nations in Canaan become types of the principalities and powers we read about in Ephesians 6:12, where the Apostle Paul tells us, "We wrestle not against flesh and blood, but against principalities, against powers, against the rulers of the darkness of this world, against spiritual wickedness in high places."

When Joshua led the people of Israel into Canaan, he and they not only had to overcome the human leaders and their armies in the land of promise, but also the evil spiritual forces under the direction of Satan who were the actual rulers of these heathen kings.

I have drawn more spiritual lessons for myself and the Back to the Bible broadcast from Joshua's experiences and the book of Joshua and its New Testament counterpart, Ephesians, than from any other person or portions in the Bible.

We as believers are warned to put on the whole armor of God, according to the book of Ephesians, if we are going to enter victoriously into spiritual warfare against the powers of Satan.

If we are to avoid a stalemate in our Christian lives, an experience similar to Israel's 40 years in the desert, we will have to choose to become spiritually aggressive.

"I press toward the mark for the prize of the high calling of God in Christ Jesus" (Phil. 3:14).

Phil 3:20 City of God by Warren Wiersbe

Read Psalm 87:1-7

Most of us have places in this world we love in special ways. It might be an old home or perhaps a school. It might even be a church or a place in that church building where God met you in a significant way. God also has a place He loves especially. "The Lord loves the gates of Zion more than all the dwellings of Jacob" (v. 2). The psalmist refers to the city of God.

Zion is important to Christians also. Of course, our citizenship is in the heavenly Zion (Phil. 3:20), where one day we shall walk the golden streets. But we can give thanks for Jerusalem, the earthly city of God.

First, our foundations are in Zion. This means the foundations of our spiritual life. The Word of God, the Bible, originated from the Jewish nation. The knowledge of the true God came from the Jewish nation. And the Son of God, the Savior of the world, came from the Jewish nation.

Second, our family is in Zion. The psalmist speaks about one who was born there. People born in Jerusalem are proud of their birthplace, just as we are proud of our birthplace. But Christians have been born from above. We have been born again spiritually because we trust Christ as our Savior.

Third, our fountains are in Zion. "All my springs are in you" (v. 7). The word springs means "fountains"--our refreshment, our strength, our spiritual power. They all come from our heavenly Zion.

* * *

Believers in Christ are citizens of heavenly Zion. Are you a citizen of the city of God? If not, why not trust Him as your Savior and begin your pilgrimage to Zion?

Citizens of Heaven! by Theodore Epp

Philippians 3:17-21

All of us who have believed in Christ, like the patriarchs, are "looking for the city which has foundations, whose architect and builder is God" (Heb. 11:10, NASB).

Believers of old were "seeking a country of their own" (v. 14, NASB), and we, too, are seeking a heavenly country. Even though we reside on earth, our legal residence is in heaven.

Therefore, our minds should be on that which originates in heaven rather than on that which originates on earth.

Paul told of those whose minds were on earthly things. He referred to them as "enemies of the cross of Christ, whose end is destruction, whose god is their appetite, and whose glory is in their shame, who set their minds on earthly things" (Phil. 3:18,19, NASB).

In contrast to this kind of people, the believer is to follow the injunctions of Colossians 3:1-3: "If then you have been raised up with Christ, keep seeking the things above, where Christ is, seated at the right hand of God. Set your mind on the things above, not on the things that are on earth. For you have died and your life is hidden with Christ in God" (NASB).

Jesus Himself prayed, "Thy will be done in earth, as it is in heaven" (Matt. 6:10). Jesus was concerned about God's will being carried out, not just in the end times but also now in the believer.

So whereas the pattern of our life is heavenly, the practice is here on earth.

"And now, little children, abide in him; that, when he shall appear, we may have confidence, and not be ashamed before him at his coming" (1 John 2:28).

DEVOTIONALS PHILIPPIANS 4

Considerate Christians by Theodore Epp

Philippians 4:1-7

The word "moderation" (Phil. 4:5) emphasizes pliability and agreeableness. It is a special consideration given to other people, and it is to be the additive that causes a believer to patiently forbear under injury without desiring revenge.

It is a spirit that is ready to forgive, and it possesses a gentleness of temper. It is also temperate in physical desires and demonstrates equity; that is, justice and impartiality in business.

Having moderation means a person will avoid extremes and will not be explosive. The peace of God is obviously not in a person's life if he has an explosive temper.

Nor can there be peace in a stubborn heart that refuses to yield to reason or to God. Nor is there the peace of God for the one living in physical excess; this only breeds greed and discontent.

It cannot be overemphasized that the "moderation" of which Paul spoke in Philippians 4:5 is related to the indwelling Holy Spirit and the fruit that is produced by Him in our lives.

That is why Paul used the word "let" in saying, "Let your moderation be known" (v. 5).

We cannot self-produce moderation any more than we can self-produce the mind of Christ. Since Christ indwells us, we are to "let this mind be in [us], which was also in Christ Jesus" (2:5).

So also, since the Holy Spirit indwells us, we are to let Him do His work in our lives to produce His fruit through us. And we are enabled to do this because "the Lord is at hand" (4:5).

"But the fruit of the Spirit is love, joy, peace, longsuffering, gentleness, goodness, faith, meekness, temperance: against such there is no law" (Gal. 5:22,23).

Rejoice Evermore by Mrs. Charles E. Cowman.

"And again I say, Rejoice" (Phil. 4:4).

It is a good thing to rejoice in the Lord. Perhaps you have tried this, and the first time seemed to fail. Never mind, keep right on and when you cannot feel any joy, when there is no spring, and no seeming comfort and encouragement, still rejoice, and count it all joy. Even when you fall into divers temptations, reckon it joy and delight and God will make your reckoning good. Do you suppose your Father will let you carry the banner of His victory and His gladness on to the front of the battle, and then coolly stand back and see you captured or beaten back by the enemy? NEVER! The Holy Spirit will sustain you in your bold advance, and fill your heart with gladness and praise, and you will find your heart all exhilarated and refreshed by the fullness within. Lord teach me to rejoice in Thee, and to "rejoice evermore." --Selected

"The weakest saint may Satan rout,
Who meets him with a praiseful shout."

"Be filled with the Spirit...singing and making melody in your heart to the Lord" (Eph. 5:18-19).

Here the Apostle urges the use of singing as one of the inspiring helps in the spiritual life. He counsels his readers not to seek their stimulus through the body, but through the spirit; not by the quickening of the flesh, but by the exaltation of the soul.

"Sometimes a light surprises
The Christian while he sings."

Let us sing even when we do not feel like it, for thus we may give wings to leaden feet and turn weariness into strength. --J. H. Jowett

"At midnight Paul and Silas prayed, and sang praises unto God: and the prisoners heard them" (Acts 16:25).

Oh, Paul, thou wondrous example to the flock, who could thus glory, bearing in the body as thou didst "the marks of the Lord Jesus"! Marks from stoning almost to the death, from thrice beating with rods, from those hundred and ninety-five stripes laid on thee by the Jews, and from stripes received in that Philippian jail, which had they not drawn blood would not have called for washing! Surely the grace which enabled thee to sing praises under such suffering is all-sufficient grace. --J. Roach

"Oh, let us rejoice in the Lord, evermore,
When darts of the tempter are flying,
For Satan still dreads, as he oft did of yore,
Our singing much more than our sighing."

Rejoice by Mrs. Charles E. Cowman.

"Rejoice in the Lord alway: and again I say, Rejoice" (Phil. 4:4).

"Sing a little song of trust,
O my heart!
Sing it just because you must,
As leaves start;
As flowers push their way through dust;
Sing, my heart, because you must.
"Wait not for an eager throng
Bird on bird;
'Tis the solitary song
That is heard.
Every voice at dawn will start,

Be a nightingale, my heart!
"Sing across the winter snow,
Pierce the cloud;
Sing when mists are drooping low
Clear and loud;
But sing sweetest in the dark;
He who slumbers not will hark."

"An' when He hears yo' sing, He bends down wid a smile on His kin' face an' listens mighty keerful, an' He says, 'Sing on, chile, I hears, an' I's comin' down to deliber yo': I'll tote dat load fer yo'; jest lean hawd on Me and de road will get smoother bime by.'"

Phil 4:4

Your Song of Victory by Dr. Warren Wiersbe

Read Psalm 9:1-6

Psalm 9 is a great victory psalm. "I will praise You, O Lord, with my whole heart; I will tell of all Your marvelous works" (v. 1). Notice the universals in that verse--"my whole heart" and "all Your marvelous works." I must confess that there are times when I don't praise the Lord with my whole heart. At times I've stood in church with the hymnbook in my hand, singing a great song of praise--but not with my whole heart. The best way to have victory is to praise the Lord wholeheartedly.

Granted, there are times when it's hard to praise Him. Think of Paul and Silas in prison (Acts 16:16-34). They had been humiliated. Their rights had been stripped away from them. Their bodies were hurting. Yet they were wholeheartedly praising the Lord. God can heal your broken heart if you give Him all the pieces. He'll put it back together again and give you wholehearted praise.

Don't praise God only about circumstances; praise Him for who He is. "I will be glad and rejoice in You" (v. 2). Maybe you can't rejoice in your circumstances or in the way you feel. Maybe you can't even rejoice in the plans that are made for today, but you always can rejoice in the Lord (Phil. 4:4). You can rejoice in the Lord today because He is worthy of your praise. "I will be glad and rejoice in You; I will sing praise to Your name, O Most High" (v. 2).

The thrust of this psalm is simply this: If your cause is right, God is on your side. He is on His throne, and He is administering His world the way He wants to. David didn't quite understand all that God was doing, but he knew that God knew what He was doing. So when your cause is right, you can praise the Lord, even in the midst of apparent defeat. When God is on the throne, everything turns out all right.

If your life is broken right now, be encouraged that God knows what is going on in your life and will restore you. Until He does, rejoice in Him and praise His name.

Don't Fret by Mrs. Charles E. Cowman

"Do not begin to be anxious" (Phil. 4:6, PBV).

Not a few Christians live in a state of unbroken anxiety, and others fret and fume terribly. To be perfectly at peace amid the hurly-burly of daily life is a secret worth knowing. What is the use of worrying? It never made anybody strong; never helped anybody to do God's will; never made a way of escape for anyone out of perplexity. Worry spoils lives which would otherwise be useful and beautiful. Restlessness, anxiety, and care are absolutely forbidden by our Lord, who said: "Take no thought," that is, no anxious thought, "saying what shall we eat, or what shall we drink, or wherewithal shall we be clothed?" He does not mean that we are not to take forethought and that our life is to be without plan or method; but that we are not to worry about these things. People know you live in the realm of anxious care by the lines on your face, the tones of your voice, the minor key in your life, and the lack of joy in your spirit. Scale the heights of a life abandoned to God, then you will look down on the clouds beneath your feet. --Rev. Darlow Sargeant

It is always weakness to be fretting and worrying, questioning and mistrusting. Can we gain anything by it? Do we not unfit ourselves for action, and unhinge our minds for wise decision? We are sinking by our struggles when we might float by faith.

Oh, for grace to be quiet! Oh, to be still and know that Jehovah is God! The Holy One of Israel must defend and deliver His own. We may be sure that every word of His will stand, though the mountains should depart. He deserves to be confided in. Come, my soul, return unto thy rest, and lean thy head upon the bosom of the Lord Jesus. --Selected

"Peace thy inmost soul shall fill
Lying still!"

In Everything by Mrs. Charles E. Cowman

"In nothing be anxious" (Phil. 4:6).

No anxiety ought to be found in a believer. Great, many and varied may be our trials, our afflictions, our difficulties, and yet there should be no anxiety under any circumstances, because we have a Father in Heaven who is almighty, who loves His children as He loves His only-begotten Son, and whose very joy and delight it is to succor and help them at all times and under all circumstances. We should attend to the Word, "In nothing be anxious, but in everything by prayer and supplication with thanksgiving let your requests be made known unto God."

"In everything," that is not merely when the house is on fire, not merely when the beloved wife and children are on the brink of the grave, but in the smallest matters of life, bring everything before God, the little things, the very little things, what the world calls trifling things--everything--living in holy communion with our Heavenly Father, and with our precious Lord Jesus all day long. And when we awake at night, by a kind of spiritual instinct again turning to Him, and speaking to Him, bringing our various little matters before Him in the sleepless night, the difficulties in connection with the family, our trade, our profession. Whatever tries us in any way, speak to the Lord about it.

"By prayer and supplication," taking the place of beggars, with earnestness, with perseverance, going on and waiting, waiting, waiting on God.

"With thanksgiving." We should at all times lay a good foundation with thanksgiving. If everything else were wanting, this is always present, that He has saved us from hell. Then, that He has given us His Holy Word--His Son, His choicest gift--and the Holy Spirit. Therefore we have abundant reason for thanksgiving. O let us aim at this!

"And the peace of God which passeth all understanding, shall keep your hearts and minds in Christ Jesus." And this is so great a blessing, so real a blessing, so precious a blessing, that it must be known experimentally to be entered into, for it passeth understanding. O let us lay these things to heart, and the result will be, if we habitually walk in this spirit, we shall far more abundantly glorify God, than as yet we have done. --George Mueller, in Life of Trust

Twice or thrice a day, look to see if your heart is not disquieted about something; and if you find that it is, take care forthwith to restore it to calm.--Francis De Sales

Perfect Peace by Woodrow Kroll

Phil 4:7

Isaiah 26:3,

You will keep him in perfect peace, whose mind is stayed on You, because he trusts in You.

Several years ago a submarine was being tested and had to remain submerged for many days. When it returned to port, someone asked the captain, "How did the terrible storm last night affect you?" The officer looked at him in surprise and exclaimed, "Storm? We didn't even know there was a storm!" The sub had been so far beneath the surface that it had reached the area known to sailors as "the cushion of the sea." Although violent storms might whip the ocean above into huge waves, the waters deep below are never stirred.

This is the promise that God gives to every believer who is willing to put his total trust in Him. The word for perfect that Isaiah uses means "complete, with no parts missing." God will give us a peace, not just in some circumstances but in all. We will have peace about our family, about our finances and about our health. When we surrender our lives to Him, the God of peace gives us a peace that "surpasses all understanding" (Phil. 4:7). It is a peace that guards both our hearts and our minds in Christ Jesus. It's a deep-down peace.

But this peace comes only to those who truly believe in and focus on the promises of God. The apostle James wrote that the person who allows doubts to cause division in his mind will be "like a wave of the sea driven and tossed by the wind . . . he is a double-minded man, unstable in all his ways" (James 1:6, 8).

As you read your Bible, be alert to the promises of God. Keep a list of those that are especially precious to you. Think about them. Meditate on them. Focus your attention on them. Pray back these promises to God, not as a reminder to Him, but as a reminder to yourself. If you fill your mind with His promises, God will fill your heart with His peace.

God's peace is for those who trust His purposes.

Cushion of the Sea by Mrs. Charles E. Cowman

"And the peace of God, which transcends all our powers of thought, will be a garrison to guard your hearts and minds in Christ Jesus" (Phil. 4:7) (Weymouth).

There is what is called the "cushion of the sea." Down beneath the surface that is agitated by storms, and driven about with winds, there is a part of the sea that is never stirred. When we dredge the bottom and bring up the remains of animal and vegetable life we find that they give evidence of not having been disturbed in the least, for hundreds and thousands of years. The peace of God is that eternal calm which, like the cushion of the sea, lies far too deep down to be reached by any external trouble and disturbance; and he who enters into the presence of God, becomes partaker of that undisturbed and undisturbable calm.--Dr. A. T. Pierson

When winds are raging o'er the upper ocean,
And billows wild contend with angry roar,
'Tis said, far down beneath the wild commotion,
That peaceful stillness reigneth evermore.

Far, far beneath, the noise of tempest dieth,
And silver waves chime ever peacefully,
And no rude storm, how fierce soe'er it flieth,
Disturbs the Sabbath of that deeper sea.

So to the heart that knows Thy love, O Purest,
There is a temple sacred evermore,
And all the babble of life's angry voices
Dies in hushed silence at its peaceful door.

Far, far away, the roar of passion dieth,
And loving thoughts rise calm and peacefully,
And no rude storm, how fierce soe'er it flieth,
Disturbs the soul that dwells, O Lord, in Thee.
--Harriet Beecher Stowe

"The Pilgrim they laid in a large upper chamber, facing the sun-rising. The name of the chamber was Peace." --Bunyan's Pilgrim's Progress

Phil 4:7

Never Forsaken by Dr. Woodrow Kroll

Joshua 1:5

"No man shall be able to stand before you all the days of your life; as I was with Moses, so I will be with you. I will not leave you nor forsake you."

Never Forsaken

In 1970 an Arizona lawyer named Russel T. Tansie filed a \$100,000 damage suit against God. The suit was filed on behalf of Mr. Tansie's secretary, Betty Penrose, who accused God of negligence in His power over the weather when He allowed a lightning bolt to strike her home. The woman won the case when the Defendant failed to appear in court. I wonder if she ever collected?

When trials come or disaster strikes, it's easy to feel as if God is being negligent. When something we can't explain happens, we believe God has let us down. But the Bible makes it very clear that this is not true. God told Joshua that He would not leave nor forsake him. Actually, in the Hebrew language, the negative comes first and makes the thought even stronger: "not will I leave you" and "not will I forsake you." The order of these words emphasizes the fact that, no matter how difficult Joshua's circumstances might become, God would not leave and He would not forsake. He was as committed to Joshua as He had been to Moses. Could you use that same kind of commitment from God today? You have it. Read Hebrews 13:5.

God's presence doesn't mean that things will always go smoothly. Christians don't walk around with protective plastic bubbles

surrounding them. We experience cancer; we endure sorrow and heartache; we fail in business. God's promise, however, is that He will continue to walk with us and be faithful to us even in our sorrows or failures. His company will bring you comfort that will exceed your understanding (Phil. 4:7).

Be assured that as God was with Moses and Joshua, He is with you as well. Jesus promised, "I am with you always, even to the end of the age" (Matt. 28:20). Whatever difficulties you face, you will not have to face them alone. He will never, no never, fail you nor forsake you. That's His promise to you.

Only God can say never--and really mean it.

Do You Have 'Pet Cares'? by Theodore Epp **Philippians 4:6,7; Matthew 6:24-34**

There are at least three characteristics, or marks, that indicate we have excessive care. The first is being more concerned about things than about God's will for us.

We will never have peace by acquiring things; peace comes only by being in God's will, with or without the possessions we think we so greatly need.

Ours in the western world is a credit card society, and we are able to obtain about anything we want almost instantly. Then the anxiety comes in struggling to pay for all that was bought on impulse!

Whether anxiety comes from wanting possessions or from concern over how to pay for them, it must be underscored that anxiety chokes the life of faith and strangles the peace of God.

A second mark of excessive care is that in our hurried state we allow ourselves to be pressured into hasty decisions and actions.

Life provides many illustrations of times when we feel we must make a decision immediately, and then later we realize it was not that urgent after all. When we are in league with God, we can afford to wait for His perfect time.

A third characteristic of excessive care is that we are constantly agitated because of unrest in our souls. Faith--not worry--brings answers to prayers.

Some people have what I call "pet cares." They like to keep these cares to talk about, and one gets the feeling they do not really want to get rid of them. But God says we are to bring all of our cares to Him.

Usually one discovers he is either casting all of his cares upon God, or he is keeping all of his cares for himself.

"But seek ye first the kingdom of God, and his righteousness; and all these things shall be added unto you" (Matt. 6:33).

The Renewed Mind by Theodore Epp **Philippians 4:8,9; 2 Peter 1: 1-9**

A good exercise is to analyze the kind of thoughts you have been thinking.

Some will be spiritual thoughts that make a positive contribution to life, others will be thoughts about things that are not necessarily good or bad, and there will be thoughts that are definitely bad--and you realize this without anyone's telling you so.

The quickest way to deteriorate or to degenerate is to allow your mind to be occupied with unworthy thoughts. We soon become what we think. Thinking good thoughts contributes to building character; thinking bad thoughts leads downward.

Jesus explained that the mouth really reveals what is in the heart: "The good man out of the good treasure of his heart brings forth what is good; and the evil man out of the evil treasure brings forth what is evil; for his mouth speaks from that which fills his heart" (Luke 6:45, NASB).

What the conscious mind thinks on gradually sinks into the subconscious mind and becomes the building blocks, or material, for one's character. "For as he thinks within himself, so he is" (Prov. 23:7, NASB).

We can make a positive contribution to our subconscious mind by controlling the thoughts of our conscious mind. But when we think selfishly, covetously, jealously and lustfully, these characteristics will become evident in our character.

"And be not conformed to this world: but be ye transformed by the renewing of your mind, that ye may prove what is that good, and acceptable, and perfect will of God" (Rom. 12:2).

Contentment by Mrs. Charles E. Cowman.

"I have learned, in whatsoever state I am, therewith to be content" (Phil. 4:11).

Paul, denied of every comfort, wrote the above words in his dungeon. A story is told of a king who went into his garden one morning, and found everything withered and dying. He asked the oak that stood near the gate what the trouble was. He found it was sick of life and determined to die because it was not tall and beautiful like the pine. The pine was all out of heart because it could not bear grapes, like the vine. The vine was going to throw its life away because it could not stand erect and have as fine fruit as the peach tree. The geranium was fretting because it was not tall and fragrant like the lilac; and so on all through the garden. Coming to a heart's-ease, he found its bright face lifted as cheery as ever. "Well, heart's-ease, I'm glad, amidst all this discouragement, to find one brave little flower. You do not seem to be the least disheartened." "No, I am not of much account, but I thought that if you wanted an oak, or a pine, or a peach tree, or a lilac, you would have planted one; but as I knew you wanted a heart's-ease, I am determined to be the best little heart's-ease that I can."

"Others may do a greater work,
But you have your part to do;
And no one in all God's heritage
Can do it so well as you."

They who are God's without reserve, are in every state content; for they will only what He wills, and desire to do for Him whatever He desires them to do; they strip themselves of everything, and in this nakedness find all things restored an hundredfold.

Phil 4:10-13 Adversity and Prosperity

Wisdom gives us perspective so that we aren't discouraged when times are difficult, or arrogant when things are going well. It takes a good deal of spirituality to be able to accept prosperity as well as adversity, for often prosperity does greater damage (Phil. 4:10-13). Job reminded his wife of this truth when she told him to curse God and die: "What? Shall we receive good at the hand of God, and shall we not receive evil [trouble]?" (Job 2:10, kjv). Earlier, Job had said, "The Lord gave, and the Lord hath taken away; blessed be the name of the Lord" (1:21, kjv).

God balances our lives by giving us enough blessings to keep us happy and enough burdens to keep us humble. If all we had were blessings in our hands, we would fall right over, so the Lord balances the blessings in our hands with burdens on our backs. That helps to keep us steady, and as we yield to Him, He can even turn the burdens into blessings.

Why does God constitute our lives in this way? The answer is simple: to keep us from thinking we know it all and that we can manage our lives by ourselves. "Therefore, a man cannot discover anything about his future" (Eccles. 7:14, niv). Just about the time we think we have an explanation for things, God changes the situation and we have to throw out our formula. This is where Job's friends went wrong: they tried to use an old road map to guide Job on a brand new journey, and the map didn't fit.

Verse for today: "I know what it is to be in need, and I know what it is to have plenty. I have learned the secret of being content in any and every situation, whether well fed or hungry, whether living in plenty or in want" (Phil. 4:12, niv).

Read: Ecclesiastes 7

Action assignment: Talk to God and ask Him to enable you to be the right kind of comforter. Resolve not to use familiar clichés and stereotyped Bible verses in conversations with friends and loved ones who are experiencing adversity.

Contentment, Not Complacency by Theodore Epp

Philippians 4:10-13; 1 Timothy 6:6-11

Nowhere does the Bible suggest that we should be content with unsatisfactory conditions. But because of our personal relationship with Christ we can be content in them.

As different situations arise and we learn our lessons one after another, we will also find it possible to be content in every situation.

Contentment is one of those concepts that is easier to define than to experience. This is probably because the tendency is to seek contentment in possessions rather than in a person

We assume that contentment comes from having things, but it is possible to have deep contentment without things.

So often we think contentment would be ours if we were promoted to the next higher position or if we were able to buy that object we think we need so much or if we could be accepted in a certain circle of friends.

But as we advance in these areas, we discover that contentment is elusive because we are seeking it in the wrong places and in the wrong way.

Contentment does not depend on what we have; it depends on who we are. It is a spiritual attainment, not something that results from purchasing power. As someone has said, "Contentment is a state of heart rather than a statement of account."

"Godliness with contentment is great gain" (1 Tim. 6:6).

We Can Do It Also by Theodore Epp

Phil 4:13, James 5:16-18

The Bible says Elijah was a man subject to like passions, or as another translation says it, "A man of like nature" (James 5:17, RSV).

God permits us to see where Elijah failed so that we need not think we are dealing with a perfect man. He was human just as we are; what sets him apart from most of us is that he fully believed God.

What Elijah accomplished is possible to us today if God should call us to such a ministry and if we will believe and trust Him for it.

It is true that we know nothing of Elijah's family background or of his life before his public ministry began. He appeared suddenly, and he went away suddenly.

Yet he was a man who had the same fallen nature that we have; he was subject to temptations similar to ours; he faced the same tests and trials that all humans face.

He walked with the same God we have the privilege of walking with. He sought the Lord for the same things that you and I seek Him for.

We may seek the Lord as Elijah did, for our Saviour made God's will very plain: "Ask, and it shall be given you; seek, and ye shall find; knock, and it shall be opened unto you" (Matt. 7:7).

The Apostle Paul said, "I can do all things through Christ which strengtheneth me" (Phil. 4:13).

"The eternal God is thy refuge, and underneath are the everlasting arms" (Deut. 33:27).

Strength for the Journey by Woodrow Kroll

Phil 4:13

1 Kings 19:8

So he arose, and ate and drank; and he went in the strength of that food forty days and forty nights as far as Horeb, the mountain of God.

Strength for the Journey

One New Year's Day in the Tournament of Roses parade, a beautiful float suddenly sputtered and quit. After checking for mechanical problems, the crew discovered that the vehicle pulling the float was simply out of fuel. The whole parade was held up until someone could get a can of gasoline. The most amusing thing about this whole fiasco was that the float represented the Standard Oil Company. With its vast oil resources, its truck ran out of gas!

Elijah had run out of gas as well. He had victoriously confronted the prophets of Baal and revived the people of Israel (1 Kings

18:20-40). He had raced King Ahab back to Jezreel and won (v. 46). Then he had fled from the wrath of Queen Jezebel and gone a day's journey into the wilderness (19:1-3). Now he was faced with another journey, this time to meet with God on Mount Horeb, but he didn't have the strength to do it on his own. God sent an angel of the Lord, who said to Elijah, "The journey is too great for you" (v. 7). Then God gave Elijah supernatural strength, and in that strength he traveled for 40 days and 40 nights.

Believers are not able to live the victorious Christian life on their own strength either. God knows that. But He is also able to give us the strength we need. The apostle Paul said, "I can do all things through Christ who strengthens me" (Phil. 4:13). God has unlimited resources, but unless we appropriate them to our lives, they do us no good.

Don't settle for a stalled-out Christian life. While you are inadequate in yourself, God is more than sufficient for all your needs. Call on Him today and you'll experience all the strength you need for the journey.

Be filled with the Spirit and you'll never run out of gas.

Phil 4:13

A Key to Future Victories by Theodore Epp

Joshua 6:1-14

Israel was assured of victory over Jericho. It was the key city to the whole campaign in Canaan. Once that obstacle was removed, the armies of Israel could spread out in all directions. So it is no wonder that we find in this incident of history an abundance of spiritual lessons.

Israel herself could not retreat. They had no alternative except to go forward in victory or suffer death. The death the Israelites might have suffered would have been that of dying at the hands of their foes.

In the spiritual realm our danger is in succumbing to the Enemy because we do not apply the victory.

Humanly speaking, Jericho was so strongly fortified as to be almost incapable of being taken. It guarded all the passes to the interior of the land of Canaan. Consequently, so long as Jericho held out, the land was safe from invasion.

We find that the same experience meets us once we choose to go on in Christian warfare. Invisible forces rise up to try to stop us and will succeed unless we follow our Captain implicitly.

The enemy, Satan, will get us to consider our weaknesses, such as temperament or lack of ability or self-control, but these are the very things over which the Lord will give us victory.

"I can do all things through Christ which strengtheneth me" (Phil. 4:13).

Rejected but Strong by Theodore Epp

Phil 4:13

1 Samuel 22:1-5; Psalm 34:8-22

We find in 1 Samuel 22 that David has stopped hiding among his enemies and has returned to his own land. It was during this period in his experience that he wrote psalms 34, 57 and 142.

David was God's anointed king in exile. These men gathered around him, recognizing him as God's chosen one. They were willing to wait for God's time with him and were willing to suffer with him if necessary.

They did for David what we are admonished to do for Christ in Hebrews 13:13: "Let us go forth therefore unto him without the camp, bearing his reproach."

Paul reminded us in Romans 8:17 that we are "heirs of God, and joint-heirs with Christ; if so be that we suffer with him."

Our Lord is now rejected but is gathering together a group to reign with Him. This is only a small army. They are equipped to fight, not with carnal weapons but with the spiritual weapons that are mighty through God. With Christ as Captain this army will conquer.

We can only do great things in the future as we learn to do the right things now. We learn from Ephesians 2:6 that God has "raised us up together, and made us sit together in heavenly places in Christ Jesus."

This is something that is true of us now. We are being trained by our Lord now and can learn to say as Paul did, "I can do all things through Christ which strengtheneth me" (Phil. 4:13).

"Though he fall, he shall not be utterly cast down: for the Lord upholdeth him with his hand" (Ps. 37:24).

Can You Claim This Promise? by Theodore Epp

Philippians 4:17-20

Philippians 4:19 cannot be understood apart from the preceding verses. Some Christians have claimed verse 19 but have not met the conditions of the preceding verses; therefore, they are unwarranted in expecting God to keep His promise of verse 19.

And when they see that God has not fulfilled what they consider to be a promise, it can make their lives a shipwreck. Thus, it is very important to understand the context of verse 19.

We will never realize the tremendous provision of verse 19 until we have met its spiritual and circumstantial requirements. Almost every promise in the Bible has one or more conditions that must be met before God's promise is fulfilled.

Philippians 4:19 says, "God shall supply all your need." We see, then, that there must be a need before God will supply. We must not presume on this promise and run ahead of God with plans of our own.

Neither should we presume on God for all our wants or be careless in spending God's money. God does not promise to supply all of our wants, only our needs.

The slothful, the spendthrift or the selfish person cannot claim the promise of Philippians 4:19. There must be a legitimate need.

Those who are slothful and unwilling to work or who are overly ambitious to gain things need not expect to have this verse fulfilled in their lives.

It should also be understood that God meets our need for a purpose--not to relieve us of our responsibility, but because He has given us responsibility.

When God gives us a responsibility to fulfill, we can count on His supplying all of the resources that are necessary to accomplish it.

"The Lord is my shepherd; I shall not want" (Ps. 23:1).

Phil 4:13

Dust and Destiny by Dr. Warren Wiersbe

Read Psalm 103:13-18

Our God remembers what we often forget. Sometimes we forget the things He wants us to remember, and that gets us into trouble. Have you remembered lately what you are made of? "As a father pities his children, so the Lord pities those who fear Him. For He knows our frame; He remembers that we are dust" (vv. 13,14). God took the dust of the ground and made Adam. Then He breathed into Adam the breath of life, and he became a living soul. Physically, we are made from the dust. But we have the mark of deity upon us, for we are made in the image of God.

When we think of dust, we think of something common and ordinary. You can walk out the back door and find dust. Perhaps you don't even have to go that far. You might just want to look on top of the radio or the dining room table. Dust speaks of weakness and frailty. But it also speaks of tremendous potential. God made us from dust that we might be weak in ourselves but strong in Him. God took the dust and made clay, and then He took the clay and made a man. Where there is dust, there is potential. He is the Potter; we are the clay.

You have to say, "Lord, You made me out of dust but full of potential. And you made me this way that I might be weak in myself but strong in You. 'Mold me and make me after Your will, while I am waiting, yielded and still.'" Paul said, "I can do all things through Christ, who strengthens me" (Phil. 4:13). He also said, "We have this treasure in earthen vessels, that the excellence of the power may be of God and not of us" (II Cor. 4:7).

Where there is dust, there is potential. Where there is dust, there is opportunity for growth. Continue to yield to Him and His creative process in your life. Ask Him to mold you after His will.

The Key to the Treasury by Theodore Epp

Phil 4:13, Ephesians 1:2,3; John 15:1-10

The believer's resources--all spiritual blessings--are "in Christ" (Eph. 1:3). Christ is the life of the believer and thus provides for him all that he needs.

Before salvation the individual was in Adam, but after salvation he is in Christ. In Adam the individual possessed only a sinful nature, but in Christ he possesses a divine nature. The divine nature of the believer causes him to want to do the will of God.

Apart from Christ, a person has no relationship to God and God has no relationship to him. Before a person receives Christ, he is unable to benefit from the spiritual blessings God has provided.

Only after a person becomes "in Christ" are all the resources of God available to him. God's wealth for the believer is deposited in Christ, and it is only when a person receives Christ that this spiritual wealth becomes available to him.

Without Christ one has no spiritual strength, but in Christ he is able to achieve any spiritual victory. However, even the believer must rely on spiritual provisions if he is to experience spiritual victories.

Jesus told believers, "I am the vine, ye are the branches: He that abideth in me, and I in him, the same bringeth forth much fruit: for without me ye can do nothing" (John 15:5).

Because Paul knew his spiritual resources he said, "I can do all things through Christ which strengtheneth me" (Phil. 4:13).

In Christ a person has position--where He is, the believer is; privilege--what He is, the believer is; possession--what He has, the believer shares. The two words "in Christ" open up all God's treasures for the believer.

"He that abideth in me, and I in him, the same bringeth forth much fruit: for without me ye can do nothing" (John 15:5).

Grow in the Gloom by Mrs. Charles E. Cowman

"I have all, and abound" (Phil. 4:18).

In one of my garden books there is a chapter with a very interesting heading, "Flowers that Grow in the Gloom." It deals with those patches in a garden which never catch the sunlight. And my guide tells me the sort of flowers which are not afraid of these dingy corners--may rather like them and flourish in them.

And there are similar things in the world of the spirit. They come out when material circumstances become stern and severe. They grow in the gloom. How can we otherwise explain some of the experiences of the Apostle Paul?

Here he is in captivity at Rome. The supreme mission of his life appears to be broken. But it is just in this besetting dinginess that flowers begin to show their faces in bright and fascinating glory. He may have seen them before, growing in the open road, but never as they now appeared in incomparable strength and beauty. Words of promise opened out their treasures as he had never seen them before.

Among those treasures were such wonderful things as the grace of Christ, the love of Christ, the joy and peace of Christ; and it seemed as though they needed an "encircling gloom" to draw out their secret and their inner glory. At any rate the realm of gloom became the home of revelation, and Paul began to realize as never before the range and wealth of his spiritual inheritance.

Who has not known men and women who, when they arrive at seasons of gloom and solitude, put on strength and hopefulness like a robe? You may imprison such folk where you please; but you shut up their treasure with them. You cannot shut it out. You may make their material lot a desert, but "the wilderness and the solitary place shall be glad, and the desert shall rejoice and blossom as the rose."--Dr. Jowett

"Every flower, even the fairest, has its shadow beneath it as it swings in the sunlight."

Where there is much light there is much shade.

Phil 4:18

Praise Through Sacrifice by Dr. Warren Wiersbe

Read Psalm 100:4

In Old Testament days, God's people brought animal sacrifices to the altar. Today, instead of bringing the Lord dead sacrifices, we present living sacrifices to Him. The Bible speaks of several sacrifices that praise God.

We have the sacrifice of praise (Heb. 13:15). When our lips thank God for what He has done and for who He is, our praise pleases Him. We have the sacrifice of a broken heart (Ps. 51:17). We are to present our bodies as a living sacrifice to Him (Rom. 12:1,2). There is the sacrifice of good works (Matt. 5:16; Heb. 13:16). And there is the sacrifice of finances (Phil. 4:18). When we share our money, time, possessions and energy with others, we bring a sacrifice to God.

Examine your life to see if you are making sacrifices for His glory. Many jobs are waiting to be done, and you might be the person for a specific job.

* * *

Have you found that place of ministry God has for you? Are you using the gifts He has given you? Offer your sacrifices of praise to God, that you may bring glory to Him and minister to others.

He Satisfies Our Soul

Phil 4:19

Streams in the Desert

Bring them hither to me" (Matt. 14:18.).

Are you encompassed with needs at this very moment, and almost overwhelmed with difficulties, trials, and emergencies? These are all divinely provided vessels for the Holy Spirit to fill, and if you but rightly understood their meaning, they would become opportunities for receiving new blessings and deliverances which you can get in no other way.

Bring these vessels to God. Hold them steadily before Him in faith and prayer. Keep still, and stop your own restless working until He begins to work. Do nothing that He does not Himself command you to do. Give Him a chance to work, and He will surely do so; and the very trials that threatened to overcome you with discouragement and disaster, will become God's opportunity for the revelation of His grace and glory in your life, as you have never known Him before. "Bring them (all needs) to me." --A. B. Simpson

"My God shall supply all your need according to his riches in glory by Christ Jesus" (Phil. 4:19).

What a source--"God!" What a supply--"His riches in glory!" What a channel--"Christ Jesus!" It is your sweet privilege to place all your need over against His riches, and lose sight of the former in the presence of the latter. His exhaustless treasury is thrown open to you, in all the love of His heart; go and draw upon it, in the artless simplicity of faith, and you will never have occasion to look to a creature-stream, or lean on a creature-prop. --C. H. M.

"MY CUP RUNNETH OVER"

There is always something over,
When we trust our gracious Lord;
Every cup He fills o'erfloweth,
His great rivers all are broad.
Nothing narrow, nothing stinted,
Ever issues from His store;
To His own He gives full measure,
Running over, evermore.

There is always something over,
When we, from the Father's hand,
Take our portion with thanksgiving,
Praising for the path He planned.
Satisfaction, full and deepening,

Fills the soul, and lights the eye,
When the heart has trusted Jesus
All its need to satisfy.

There is always something over,
When we tell of all His love;
Unplumbed depths still lie beneath us,
Unsealed heights rise far above:
Human lips can never utter
All His wondrous tenderness,
We can only praise and wonder,
And His name forever bless.
--Margaret E. Barber

"How can He but, in giving Him, lavish on us all things" (Rom. 8:32).

This Thing is From Me by Mrs. Charles E. Cowman.

Phil 4:19

"This thing is from me" (1 Kings 12:24).

"Life's disappointments are veiled love's appointments." --Rev. C. A. Fox

My child, I have a message for you today; let me whisper it in your ear, that it may gild with glory any storm clouds which may arise, and smooth the rough places upon which you may have to tread. It is short, only five words, but let them sink into your inmost soul; use them as a pillow upon which to rest your weary head. This thing is from Me.

Have you ever thought of it, that all that concerns you concerns Me too? For, "he that toucheth you, toucheth the apple of mine eye" (Zech. 2:8). You are very precious in My sight. (Isa. 43:4) Therefore, it is My special delight to educate you.

I would have you learn when temptations assail you, and the "enemy comes in like a flood," that this thing is from Me, that your weakness needs My might, and your safety lies in letting Me fight for you.

Are you in difficult circumstances, surrounded by people who do not understand you, who never consult your taste, who put you in the background? This thing is from Me. I am the God of circumstances. Thou camest not to thy place by accident, it is the very place God meant for thee.

Have you not asked to be made humble? See then, I have placed you in the very school where this lesson is taught; your surroundings and companions are only working out My will.

Are you in money difficulties? Is it hard to make both ends meet? This thing is from Me, for I am your purse-bearer and would have you draw from and depend upon Me. My supplies are limitless (Phil. 4:19). I would have you prove my promises. Let it not be said of you, "In this thing ye did not believe the Lord your God" (Deut. 1:32).

Are you passing through a night of sorrow? This thing is from Me. I am the Man of Sorrows and acquainted with grief. I have let earthly comforters fail you, that by turning to Me you may obtain everlasting consolation (2 Thess. 2:16, 17). Have you longed to do some great work for Me and instead have been laid aside on a bed of pain and weakness? This thing is from Me. I could not get your attention in your busy days and I want to teach you some of my deepest lessons. "They also serve who only stand and wait." Some of My greatest workers are those shut out from active service, that they may learn to wield the weapon of all--prayer.

This day I place in your hand this pot of holy oil. Make use of it free, my child. Let every circumstance that arises, every word that pains you, every interruption that would make you impatient, every revelation of your weakness be anointed with it. The sting will go as you learn to see Me in all things. --Laura A. Barter Snow

"This is from Me," the Saviour said,
As bending low He kissed my brow,
'For One who loves you thus has led.

Just rest in Me, be patient now,
Your Father knows you have need of this,
Tho', why perchance you cannot see.
Grieve not for things you've seemed to miss.
The thing I send is best for thee.'
"Then, looking through my tears, I plead,
'Dear Lord, forgive, I did not know,
'Twill not be hard since Thou dost tread,
Each path before me here below.
And for my good this thing must be,
His grace sufficient for each test.
So still I'll sing, "Whatever be
God's way for me is always best.'""

Lift Your Eyes by Warren Wiersbe

Phil 4:19

Read Psalm 123:1-4

If the outlook in your life is disturbing, try the uplook. That's what the psalmist did. "Unto You I lift up my eyes, O You who dwell in the heavens" (v. 1).

What does it mean to lift your eyes to the Lord? First, it means to acknowledge His sovereignty. We lift our eyes because He is higher than we are. Isaiah focused his eyes on the throne of God and saw Him "high and lifted up" in the temple (Isa. 6:1). He is sovereign. He is the Master; we are the servants. He is the Creator; we are the creatures. He is the Heavenly Father; we are the children.

Second, we admit His sufficiency. "Behold, as the eyes of servants look to the hand of their masters, as the eyes of a maid to the hand of her mistress, so our eyes look to the Lord our God, until He has mercy on us" (v. 2). We look to Him because of His sufficiency. Whatever we need, He is able to provide. "My God shall supply all your need according to His riches in glory by Christ Jesus" (Phil. 4:19).

Third, when we lift up our eyes to the Lord, we can accept His generosity. "Have mercy on us, O Lord, have mercy on us!" the psalmist prays in verse 3. God is generous, the Giver of every good and perfect gift. "If you then, being evil, know how to give good gifts to your children, how much more will your Father who is in heaven give good things to those who ask Him!" (Matt. 7:11).

* * *

Acknowledge the sovereignty of God today. He is in control. Recognize His sufficiency. He can give you what you need for this day. Then accept His generosity. He enjoys giving to those who trust Him and glorify Him in all that they do.

Phil 4:19

From Rags to Riches by Dr. Woodrow Kroll

Esther 8:1-2

"On that day King Ahasuerus gave Queen Esther the house of Haman, the enemy of the Jews. And Mordecai came before the king, for Esther had told how he was related to her. So the king took off his signet ring, which he had taken from Haman, and gave it to Mordecai; and Esther appointed Mordecai over the house of Haman."

From Rags to Riches

During the 1995 Christmas holidays, a passing motorist spotted a limousine stranded with a flat tire on a busy stretch of New Jersey highway. The man graciously stopped and offered to help the chauffeur change the tire. Just as the task was finished, the darkened window rolled down and the man inside asked what he and his wife could do to repay the favor. "Just send my wife a big bouquet of flowers," said the guy and handed him his card. Two weeks later a gargantuan bouquet of orchids arrived with a card reading, "We paid off your home mortgage. Marla and Donald Trump." Informers say the Trumps forked over more than \$100,000 for the gesture.

Mordecai experienced a similar windfall. With the death of his enemy, Haman, he came into the possession of all Haman's wealth, one of Persia's highest officials. From the position of a minor bureaucrat, Mordecai suddenly became second only to the king.

Every Christian is graced with this same fortune. As unbelievers, we were spiritually impoverished. We owed a debt to God we could never repay. But when we trusted Jesus as Savior, we received the promise of His provision for our entire lifetime (Phil. 4:19). Even better, we were made spiritual billionaires when we became joint-heirs with Christ (Rom. 8:17).

Perhaps you are experiencing lean times. In spite of your efforts to be a good steward, too much month is left at the end of the

paycheck. Don't despair. Trust God to meet your needs. These times of testing will someday give way to an abundance that is beyond your comprehension. You have God's word on it!
He is a poor man who can only measure his wealth in dollars.

PHILIPPIANS DEVOTIONALS

J R MILLER

I thank my God upon every remembrance of you. - Philippians 1:3

It has been noted that the Philippian church never gave Paul any anxiety.

Most of the churches founded by him lay heavily on his heart at some time or other. They had quarrels, and he had to be peacemaker. Or there were cases of wrong-doing, and he had to bear the burden. But the Philippian church was happy in itself. There were no wranglings, no dissensions. Paul got only joy and comfort from this church. Here he thanks God for it.

It is a great thing to live so as to be a comfort to our friends, to those who love us and live for us. It is a great thing for a church to be a joy to a pastor, never to put thorns into his pillow. It is a great thing for children to be a comfort to their parents.

A father was just saying that not one of his children - now all married and settled in life - has ever caused him an anxious day or a sleepless night. Why should we not set for ourselves the aim always to be a comfort to our friends?

For to me to live is Christ, and to die is gain. - Philippians 1:21

It is a splendid watch-word for life that Paul gives us here - "To me to live is Christ."

A great many people could not fill out the sentence in that way, if they were to write honestly the purpose and motive of their life. Some would write, "To me to live is to make money," or "to gratify my appetites."

Every Christian should be able to make Paul's word his own - "To me to live is Christ."

This means that the one purpose of our living is to honor Christ, to serve Him, to do His will, to love and obey Him, and to advance His kingdom. When one lives thus, one never questions the wisdom of any use of His life Christ may make. If He wants us to work, that is well. If He lays us aside to suffer, it is all right. If He sets aside our plans, we do not complain. Whether He leads us into sorrow or into joy, it matters not.

Our life is his, and whatsoever pleases Him is right.

Receive him therefore in the Lord with all gladness. - Philippians 2:29

It is pleasant to look up the little biographies of good men that we find imbedded in Paul's letters. There is so much that is deep and abstruse in some of his doctrinal discussions that we are apt to think of him as a sort of doctrinaire, without much of the genial, loving side of life in him.

But when we study his letters we discover our mistake. He loved people, he needed friends, and he always saw the best that was in them.

The little story of Epaphroditus that we have in this chapter is very interesting.

Paul appreciated him. Nor did he forget his kindness - he had ministered to his needs. He was the messenger from the Philippian church, and had brought tokens of love to the apostle from his old friends. He had been taken sick, too, in Rome, but God had mercifully spared him. Now he is returning, and is to carry this letter.

This kindly mention of Epaphroditus shows us how somewhere, if not in books, every kindness any of us does is written down.

Forgetting those things which are behind, and reaching forth unto those things which are before. - Philippians 3:13

We ought not to live in the past. No matter how full of blessing and good it is, we may not stay in it. Life is before us, never behind us. If we linger, we shall lose our place, and our fellows will press on and leave us.

The best way to live for to-morrow is to do well the work of to-day; yet the future should always exert an inspiring influence upon us. In the time of discouragement it is the hope of overcoming that brings cheer.

When we are in sorrow it is the promise of comfort that sustains us. In the task-work of school days it is the thought of what manhood will bring of achievement that inspires the student. In the struggles of earthly life it is the larger life of heaven that keeps the heart brave and strong.

We should let the past go, with all it contains of memory and of good, while we turn ever to the future, with hope and courage.

I press toward... the prize. - Philippians 3:14

The best ever lies before us if we are truly following Christ.

Life is a mountain climb, and we never get to the summit in this world. Paul tells us that he has not yet reached the end of his race. But he is pressing on with inexhaustible energy and enthusiasm. He forgets the things, which are behind.

Some people live altogether in their past. They tell you over and over of the great things they have done. Paul had done a great many brave and noble things, but he forgot them all, never talked about them, did not take time to record them - he was so eager to get on and to attain loftier heights, to do greater things, to win greater victories. Before him lay the goal with the prize of life, and to this he pressed continually.

It is a noble picture, this old apostle, at an age when many men are talking about "the dead line," still reaching forward and holding eyes fixed on the real goal of his life far ahead.

We ought not to lose the lesson.

Be careful for nothing. - Philippians 4:6

How to learn not to worry is one of the lessons everyone should master.

Worry is a terribly wasteful experience. It uses up the strength we need for our duty. It unfits us for doing our work well. It is dishonoring to God, for He has promised to care for us, if only we do His will faithfully. Then it is utterly fruitless, for it does not take away the things it frets over.

The Bible gives many lessons on the subject, but none that makes plainer just how we are to eliminate worrying from our life than what Paul here tells us to do.

First of all, we are simply not to worry. "In nothing be anxious." There is no room for exceptions, special circumstances, and all that. We are not to be anxious about anything.

What then shall we do with the matters that we are disposed to worry over? Put them into the hands of God in prayer, and leave them there. If we do this the peace of God will guard our hearts, our thoughts, from all anxiety. It will be a great deal to us in every way to learn this lesson.