

Sermons on Philippians-Lowell Johnson

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OUTLINE OF PHILIPPIANS ([Warren Wiersbe](#))

Key theme: The joy of the Lord

Key verse: Philippians 3:1 (Others list Php 1:21, 4:12)

I. THE SINGLE MIND—Philippians 1

- A. The fellowship of the Gospel—Philippians 1:1–11
- B. The furtherance of the Gospel—Philippians 1:12–26
- C. The faith of the Gospel—Philippians 1:27–30

II. THE SUBMISSIVE MIND—Philippians 2

- A. The example of Christ—Philippians 2:1–11
- B. The example of Paul—Philippians 2:12–18
- C. The example of Timothy—Philippians 2:19–24
- D. The example of Epaphroditus—Philippians 2:25–30

III. THE SPIRITUAL MIND—Philippians 3

- A. Paul's past—Philippians 3:1–11 (the accountant—"I count")
- B. Paul's present—Philippians 3:12–16 (the athlete—"I press")
- C. Paul's future—Philippians 3:17–21 (the alien—"I look")

IV. THE SECURE MIND—Philippians 4

- A. God's peace—Philippians 4:1–9
- B. God's power—Philippians 4:10–13
- C. God's provision—Philippians 4:14–23

Philippians 1:1-11

PHILIPPIANS: PRAISE FROM PRISON

As you know the Apostle Paul wrote many letters to churches in the first century Church. We have many of those letters in our New Testament, but I'm confident He wrote letters to churches that we know nothing about.

Paul also wrote letters to churches for different reasons. For example, he wrote to some churches to combat sins within the Church. They are letters of rebuke and correction. He also wrote letters to individuals, like Philemon, who had a slave by the name of

Onesimus who had run away from him. Onesimus met Paul and Paul won him to the Lord and he became very profitable and helpful to Paul in the ministry. Paul wrote Philemon to tell him that he was sending Onesimus back to him, but he asked him not to receive him back as a slave, but as a brother in Christ. In fact Paul asked him to receive Onesimus in the same manner as he would receive him, Paul.

Paul wrote to those that he had won to the Lord who later were called of the Lord to pastor churches, like Timothy, his son in the faith. He would give both Timothy and Titus pastoral instruction.

But the Book of Philippians is a unique letter in several respects.

1. Philippians is a letter of gratitude and appreciation. Paul had started this church in Philippi and it was no doubt his favorite church. He had a kindred spirit with the church. It was Paul's Love Letter to the church. One of the purposes for writing was to thank them for the financial gift he received from them (see Philippians 4:10-18).
 - Philippians is probably the first of four books Paul wrote from his first Roman imprisonment (The other three are Ephesians, Colossians, and Philemon.). He writes also to calm their fears about how he was doing in prison (see Philippians 1:12-14). He also encourages them in their faith while he is in prison.
2. Philippians was in many ways a "model church." For the most part it was a church with a sweet fellowship, filled with love and unity. They were one in the bond of love. There are no words of rebuke or correction. It was a church filled with joy. The words "joy," "rejoice," or "gladness" are found at least 14 times in the book. When you open the Book of Philippians, it is like opening a window to a gust of fresh air. This book pulsates and radiates with joy.
3. Philippians is also a book filled with Jesus. In the 104 verses in Philippians, the Name of Jesus is found some 20 times.

First, a bit of background. You find the founding of the church at Philippi in Acts 16.

- Acts 16:9-10: While Paul was in Galatia he wanted to go on through Asia, preaching and starting new churches, but the Holy Spirit said, "No, Paul, that's not what I want you to do."

And in a night vision Paul saw a man from Macedonia who begged him saying, "Come over to Macedonia and help us!" And so Paul, Timothy, Silas, and Luke made their way there.

- Acts 16:13-15: On a Sabbath day they went to Philippi and a little band of women were meeting at the river for a prayer meeting. There Paul talked to a lady named Lydia, a woman of great wealth and influence, and she became the first European convert.

- Acts 16:16-18: As Paul re-entered the city, a demon-possessed slave girl whose owners were getting wealthy by her psychic abilities and fortune-telling abilities, began to follow Paul and his team around saying, "These are men of the Most High God." What she was saying was true, but God's men didn't need a demon-possessed girl to advertise for them. So Paul cast the demon out.

- Acts 16:25-31: When the girl's owners saw their source of financial gain was gone, they had Paul and Silas thrown in jail, but the jailer is going to be saved and the Philippian Church founded.

This is Paul's most personal letter and Paul begins by telling the folks there how grateful he is for them and how much they mean to him. If someone has made a real impact on our life, it would do us good and it would do them good to tell them how much we appreciate them. Listen to what Paul tells them as he begins his letter:

1. I have you on my mind – Philippians 1:3.
2. I am thankful for you – Philippians 1:3.
3. I keep you in my prayers – Philippians 1:4.
4. I have great expectations for you – Philippians 1:6.
5. I have you in my heart – Philippians 1:7.
6. I love you – Philippians 1:8.

What was it that Paul loved and appreciated them for?

I. For Their Friendship Philippians 1:3-4

Paul said, "Every time I think about you, I thank God for you." Now that's quite a statement to say about someone!

You say, "Well, that's just preacher talk. Paul said that to everybody." But that is not what Paul said to everybody. He didn't say it to the church at Galatia. He said to them, "O foolish Galatians, who has bewitched you?"

Not every church brought joy to the heart of Paul. Corinth, for example, was a divided church. They were fighting, fussing, and feuding. They were selfish and carnal and suing one another. Corinth Discouraged Paul; Galatia Depressed Paul, but Philippi

Delighted Paul.

I can't honestly say that I thank God for ALL the people I've pastored. I've pastored some folks that were just down-right hard to get along with. Some did nothing but cause problems. For some, if they couldn't run things they would ruin things if they could.

But to the Philippians Paul said, "There is nothing I can remember about you that causes me to be sad or unhappy." "I think my God upon every remembrance of you." What a great testimony!

Paul had some precious memories of these folks. Memory is a gift from God. You can use memory to recall pleasant memories. Memories of times folks encouraged you and made investments in your life. Paul remembered the times the Philippians stood with him and supported him financially.

Notice Philippians 1:4: "Always ...in every prayer of mine ...for you all ...making request for you all with joy."

II. For Their Fellowship Philippians 1:5-8

The word "fellowship" here literally means "a coveted partnership." It has the idea of Pastor and people moving in the same direction. And they moved in the same direction "from the first day until now." That means they had some initiative, some motivation about them. They were not quitters; they saw things through.

It's a wonderful thing when a pastor and the people move in the same direction, but it's a terrible thing when they move in different directions.

Notice Philippians 1:7: The church stood by Paul when he was arrested, when he was in chains, when he was in prison, and they also supported him when he was in prison. And when they learned that Paul longed to see them, they came and visited him in prison.

Philippians 1:6 is one of the greatest verses in the entire Bible. Note three things from this verse.

1. God takes the initiative in starting His work in you.
 - God is the one who "begins a good work" in us. Salvation always begins with God. He makes the first move, and if He didn't make the first move, we would make no move at all.
2. God takes personal responsibility for continuing and completing His work in you.
 - Nothing will block the accomplishment of God's divine purpose in us. God intends that all His children be conformed to the image of Jesus Christ, and He will not rest until that "good work" is finally finished.
3. God guarantees the outcome of His work in you.

Not only does God start the process, and continue the process, He also guarantees its ultimate outcome. He will "carry it on to completion until the day of Christ Jesus." God never does

anything in halves. It could be translated, "He will evermore be putting the finishing touches on us." Isn't that lovely? He's still working on me!

III. For Their Faithfulness Philippians 1:9-11

Paul prays for their growth in:

A. Spiritual Devotion – Philippians 1:9a

"I pray that your love may abound still more and more." Imagine an empty cup slowly being filled with water. When the water reaches the brim, it begins to overflow down the sides of the cup. That's the picture Paul has in mind – love filling the hearts of the Philippians until it overflows. No matter how much love we have, our love can always increase. Paul wants their love to grow to reach more and more people and to grow so that it loves better.

B. Spiritual Discernment – Philippians 1:9-10

"So that you may be able to discern what is best." Paul prays that they would continually make wise choices in life. He is praying that they would not be satisfied with the status quo or with spiritual mediocrity but would push to true spiritual excellence.

C. Spiritual Development – Philippians 1:10

"That you may be sincere" – real, genuine to the core, without hypocrisy. "Without offense" – so live that your behavior will not cause your brother to stumble.

Pay attention to where your feet go and what your eyes see and what your ears hear and what your mouth speaks and what your mind thinks.

D. Spiritual Department – Philippians 1:11

“Filled with the fruit of righteousness that comes through Jesus Christ.” The Bible often uses the metaphor of a fruit tree to describe both the life of the righteous and the life of the wicked. Regarding false prophets, Jesus declared that by their fruit you shall know them (Matthew 7:20). A fruitful life of a Christian is one that is distinctively Christian in every aspect.

Note that this fruit comes “through Jesus Christ.” As we are rooted in Him, and as we draw our strength from Him, His power flows through us and produces the “fruit of righteousness” in us. He is the root and His power produces the fruit.

Philippians 1:12-20

REMAINING JOYFUL IN DIFFICULT CIRCUMSTANCES

Let me remind you that it had been some ten years since Paul started the Church in Philippi and it had been about four years since Paul had last seen them. They had heard a rumor that Paul had been imprisoned in Rome for preaching the Gospel. The Philippian church sent a man named Epaphroditus to check on Paul and to carry him a financial gift and to minister to him while he was in prison. Paul writes this letter of Philippians and sends the letter back by Epaphroditus to answer some of their questions and to instruct them and to encourage them in their walk with the Lord.

In the opening verses of Philippians Paul assures the church of his continued love for them. He tells them that he has the church on his mind, in his heart, and in his prayers. Paul is positive in his attitude that God will use his experience in prison for the furtherance of the Gospel.

Paul says, “Yes, I’m in prison, but I want you to know, brethren, that the things which happened to me have actually turned out for the furtherance of the Gospel” or “to advance the Gospel” (verse 12).

The word “furtherance” or “advance” means “to cut before.” It is a military term that refers to the movement of an army into enemy territory. It refers to the army engineers who go before the troops to open the way into new territory. These first soldiers to move forward would clear the way for the troops coming behind them by removing all obstacles such as trees, rocks, and other barriers to prepare a road for the advancing army. Paul means to say that his imprisonment – which seemed to be a setback – actually served to advance the Gospel in Rome.

The words “fallen out” or “turned out” (verse 12) means something was meant to turn out one way, but God in His sovereignty and His providence caused them to turn out another way. Paul is saying that God is in charge of everything that happens to us – the good and the bad, the positive and the negative – and that in some way unknown to us, He orders all things so that what happens to us is for our good and His glory.

There are examples of this all through the Bible:

1. In Genesis 45 the brothers of Joseph treated him unfairly. They sold him into Egyptian slavery, but he later became second in command in Egypt. Because of the famine in the land, his brothers had to stand before Joseph to buy food. When Joseph revealed himself to his brothers, they were afraid for their lives, but Joseph said, “It was not you who sent me here, but God. You meant it for evil towards me, but God meant it for good.” God’s providence was in play.
2. Satan wanted to ruin Job by taking all that he had and causing him to suffer. Job said, “Though He slay me, yet will I trust Him.”
3. Most have heard of the great British preacher, Charles Hadden Spurgeon, but few know the story of his wife, Susannah. Early in their marriage Mrs. Spurgeon became an invalid. It

looked like her only ministry would be to encourage her husband and pray for his work. But God gave her a burden to share her husband’s sermon books with pastors who were unable to purchase them. This led to the founding of the Book Fund, a work of faith that provided thousands of pastors with tools for their work. Again, the providence of God was at work.

Look how the providence of God worked in Paul’s life:

I. Paul’s Commitment Philippians 1:12-14, 19

Suppose I gave each of you a sheet of paper and asked each of you to write at the top of the page what is the most important thing

or person in your life. What is the thing that get you out of bed every morning? When people look at your life, what do they see? What is the most important thing you could accomplish in your life? What is Number One in your life? We all have something that is of absolutely importance in our life. What would you write at the top of the page.

Don't just write something religious just because you're in church. What is the thing that you think about or talk about most. Where do you invest most of your money and time. For some they would write the word "Career" or "Family" or some sport.

Later Paul is going to say, "For to me, to live is Christ." For Paul, the word would be Christ. Magnifying Christ and advancing the Gospel of Jesus Christ was his priority.

Look at verse 12: "But I want you to know, brethren, that ALL THINGS WHICH HAPPENED TO ME have actually turned out for the furtherance of the Gospel." Think for a moment about the long chain of events that led to this moment in his life.

It started in Acts 21. After Paul returned from one of his missionary journeys, he went to Jerusalem to make an offering in the Temple. There he was mobbed in the Temple, because they said he had brought a Gentile onto the Temple Mount. There Paul was severely beaten and would have been murdered if the Roman authorities had not stepped in, rescued him, and arrested him.

There was such intense hatred against Paul that 60 Jewish men took a vow before God that they would not eat or sleep until Paul was dead. He was moved to Caesarea, where for two years he sat in a Roman prison, waiting to have his case brought before the court. He gave his testimony before Festus and Felix, the Roman governor, who listened attentively and then kept Paul in confinement, hoping for a bribe.

Still later he testified in chains before King Agrippa and finally he said, "I appeal to Caesar," which was the right of every Roman citizen. Eventually he was put on a boat with other prisoners and sent to Rome. But the boat never made it because the boat sank during a violent storm on the Mediterranean Sea. Paul and other survivors were washed up on the shores of Malta where a serpent came out of the fire they had built to warm themselves. The snake bit Paul on the arm and Paul shook the snake off into the fire and was not harmed by the poisonous snake.

Finally he was brought in chains to Rome where he was kept under house arrest for two years, awaiting trial before Caesar. Meanwhile his opponents spread rumors about him, attempting to destroy his reputation and ruin his ministry.

The thing I love about the Apostle Paul is that he was the kind of guy who could take something negative and turn it into something positive. He was an optimist. As he looks back, he sees clearly that everything happened for a divinely-ordained purpose. Paul had a high view of the providence of God. If he had not had a strong personal commitment to the Lord Jesus, he would have never made it.

II. Paul's Chains Philippians 1:13-14

The same God who used Moses' rod and David's sling, used Paul's chains. Little did the Roman's realize that the chains they affixed to Paul's wrist would release him instead of bind him. In 2 Timothy 2:9 Paul said, "I suffer trouble as an evildoer, even to the point of chains; but the word of God is not chained."

Paul did not complain about his chains. Instead, he consecrated them to God and asked God to use them to advance the Gospel. And God answered his prayer.

Paul's chains gave him contact with the lost. He was being guarded by members of the elite Praetorian Guard. Those highly-trained soldiers served as a cross between the Secret Service and the Army Special Forces. The Praetorian Guard numbered about 9,000 in Paul's day. They were paid double the normal wage and served for 12 years, after which most of them retired in and around Rome. After retirement they became a powerful political force. Many of them served in the Roman Senate.

All this means that the Praetorian Guards were one of the most important groups in ancient Rome. How would Paul reach them with the Gospel? God wanted to reach the Praetorian Guard so He took His best man and had him unjustly arrested and sent to Rome where he was put in jail and chained to a member of the Praetorian Guard 24 hours a day. Paul had a captive audience! Since they changed guards every six hours, this meant Paul had a new audience four times a day, 28 times a week, and over 2,900 times in two years.

That's why Paul could truthfully say that the news about Christ had spread through the entire palace guard. No doubt he had personally witnessed to hundreds if not thousands of them during his two years of confinement. God designed a "chain reaction" for the spread of the Gospel in Rome.

Every time Paul was chained to a new guard, it probably went something like this: "Hi, my name is Paul. What's your name? Marcus? Hi, Marcus, I want to tell you about my life. I use to be religious, but I was not a Christian. But one day on the way to Damascus, I met Jesus Christ and my life has been totally different every since. Let me tell you about it ..."

Six hours later, that guard was unchained; another man took his place. “Hi, my name is Paul. What’s your name? Phillip? Hi, Phillip. Let me tell you about my life.”

Around the clock these Roman soldiers saw Paul’s life, heard his testimony, heard him pray, listened as he dictated letters to churches.

III. Paul’s Critics Philippians 1:15-19

Not only did Paul have a prison problem, he had a people problem. Not everyone who preaches the Gospel preaches with a right motive or from a godly heart.

Paul said that some preached from envy, strife, selfish ambition, supposing to add affliction to his chains.

- Some preach from envy – they were jealous of Paul’s apostolic power and authority. They were also jealous of his success and giftedness.
- Some preached from strife speaks of contention, rivalry, and conflict. Some tried to discredit Paul. Some preached to promote themselves
- Some preached from goodwill. These were Paul’s supporters. They were grateful for Paul as a man and they were grateful for his ministry.

God said that the important thing is that the Gospel is preached.

God has given each one of us as believers a great commission: Reach the world for Christ sake! Teach the lost what they must do to be saved! Make disciples of the saved! Time is short, so work together! This thing is too important to be in conflict with each other or to be in competition with each other!

Philippians 1:21-26

JESUS IS EVERYTHING TO ME

Paul is in his first Roman imprisonment as he writes these words. He knows that his life could end very soon. The execution squad could come for him at any moment, take him outside to the place of execution, and put him to death. They would tie his hands behind his back, have him kneel and place his head on a block, raise an axe above his head, and with one powerful swing of the axe his head would no longer be attached to his body.

But Paul is not pacing the floor in panic. Instead, he is declaring his testimony. Remember that he is in prison for preaching the Gospel, but he says, “Jesus is everything to me. For to me, to live is Christ, and to die is gain.”

If you want to know Paul’s secret of success in just one sentence, here it is from Philippians 1:21, “For to me, to live is Christ and to die is gain.” Many of us learned this verse as children in Sunday School. We’ve heard it and recited it and memorized it over and over again. This verse reveals why Paul did what he did, why he said what he said, and how he found the strength to endure incredible hardship.

Before going on, let’s take a little quiz. How would you complete the following sentence? “For to me to live is _____.” What word or phrase would you put in the blank? If your name is Michael Jordan, the word might be “basketball.” If your name is Bill Gates, the word might be “Microsoft.” If your name is Babe Ruth, you might say, “home runs.” If you are a parent, the word might be “children.” If you are in high school, you might say “going to Homecoming.” The list of possibilities is endless.

Don’t miss the point. No one leaves that sentence blank. Everyone finishes it with something. If you didn’t fill the blank with Christ, what did you put there?

Paul had found the key to joyful living and confident dying. That key was Jesus.

Three things I want us to examine:

I. Paul’s Philosophy Philippians 1:21a

One translation puts it this way: “For me, living is Jesus.” Jesus was the theme of Paul’s life. That is really a definition of what a Christian is.

Consider the phrase “to live is Christ.” What does it mean? It means that Christ is “the essence of our life ...the model of our life ...the aim of our life ...the reward of our life.”

Think of the prepositions that express relationships. We live IN Christ ...FOR Christ ...BY Christ ...THROUGH Christ ...and FROM Christ. He is the beginning, the middle, and the end of life. He is truly the Alpha and Omega, the A and Z, and every letter in between.

Ponder these three statements:

1. Christ is life.
2. Christ transforms life.
3. Christ transcends (surpasses) life.

A. For Paul, Christ was the Source of his life – Philippians 1:6.

Paul didn't really begin to live until he came to know Jesus as his personal Savior – nor do we! (John 10:10)

B. For Paul, Christ was the Subject of his life – Philippians 1:12-13.

If you didn't like to talk about Jesus, you had better not stay around Paul, for he would turn every conversation toward Jesus. You can tell a lot about a person by what he talks about all the time.

C. For Paul, Christ was the Standard of his life – Philippians 3:14.

Paul wanted to become more and more like the Lord Jesus.

D. For Paul, Christ was the Satisfaction of his life – Philippians 4:11-12.

E. For Paul, Christ was the Strength of his life – Philippians 4:13.

F. For Paul, Christ was the Supply of his life – Philippians 4:19.

G. For Paul, Christ was the Security of his life – Philippians 1:6.

What does it mean to say that the Christian life is Christ? Here is the heart of Christianity:

1. Faith IN Christ and in Christ alone.
2. Fellowship WITH Christ.
3. Following AFTER Christ.

II. Paul's Prospect Philippians 1:21b, 23

Do you fear death? You shouldn't if you are a Christian. Death is the vehicle that takes us home to God. Of course, if you are not saved and you do not know Jesus as your personal Savior and you die in that condition, you have reason to fear death, because this life is as good as it gets and it's down hill after that.

A lot of people want to know what death is like, like Mike, a little boy who wrote this letter to God:

Dear God,

What is it like when a person dies? Nobody will tell me. I just want to know, I don't want to do it.

Your friend,

Mike

Many of us want to know the same thing: What happens at the point of death? In the Old Testament, Job asked the question everybody wants to know: “If a man dies, shall he live again?” Death is not a period; it is a comma.

Many read Philippians 1:21 and wonder how death can be “gain” for anyone. Let me share this with you:

1. In death Christians lose everything we don't need – we lose the world, the flesh, and the devil. We lose our trials, our troubles, our tears, our fears, our weakness.

2. We keep everything that matters – we keep our personality, our identity, and our knowledge of all that is good.
3. We gain what we never had before – we gain heaven, the saints, the angels, the presence of God and Jesus Himself.

For the child of God, death is not less of life, but more of life. Death does not mean the End of being but the Enlargement of being.

The word “gain” means “to profit on an investment.” When I die, I will cash in on all my investments. There are great death benefits for the child of God!

Death is described in the Bible by the word “depart” or “departure.” Paul used the word in 2 Timothy 4:6-7 when he said, “The time of my departure has come. I have fought the good fight, I have finished my course, I have kept the faith.” The Greek word for “depart” is the wonderful word “analuo” (ana-lu-o).

1. “Analuo” means to release a prisoner.

A prisoner could be locked up in jail for years awaiting the moment of release. What a day it would be when the locks were opened, the chains were taken off, and a prisoner was allowed to walk free.

At the moment of death, our spirits are set free.

2. “Analuo” means to set sail in a ship.

It pictures a vessel that has been tied to a dock until the right time comes. At that moment the lines are untied, the sails raised, and the vessel begins the journey.

When death comes the soul leaves for eternity.

3. “Analuo” means to take down a tent.

At the end of a camping trip, the time comes to break camp. The tent that one has lived in has to be taken down.

The body has served its purpose as the dwelling place of the spirit. Death is breaking camp and going home.

4. “Analuo” means to unyoke a beast from its burden.

After a hard day's labor, the master would lift the yoke from off the neck of the oxen.

Death is freeing a person from the burdens of this life.

Notice again the word “gain;” “To die is gain.” The word “gain” means “Any gain or profit made on an investment.” It literally means, “more of the same.”

- I know Jesus now; I will know Him in a greater way then.
- I love Jesus now; I will have a greater ability to love Him then.
- I have fellowship with Him now; there is a deeper, richer, fuller fellowship with Him to come.

III. Paul's Perplexity Philippians 1:23-26

Paul was conflicted. He was ready and willing to die because he looked forward to life with Christ in heaven. In the meantime he was willing to stay if he could make a difference in the lives of other people.

Paul said, “If I had my ‘rathers,’ I had rather go on to be with the Lord, but it is more needful for you that I remain here a little longer.”

Paul knew that departing to be with the Lord would mean:

1. Relief and Release from suffering.
2. Reward for his service here.
3. Reunion with the saints there.
4. Residence with his Savior there.

A dear saint of God who loved the Lord Jesus so much was asked to sign some important papers before he died. He was told that it would make things easier for the family later if he could do so. They put a pen in his hand and he began to write. They didn't look at the papers until he breathed his last. Then, looking at the papers, he had printed – not his name – but JESUS – the only name that

meant anything to him at that moment.

Philippians 1:27-30

LIVING LIKE A CHRISTIAN

Before reading the Passage.

Up to this point, the Book of Philippians has been mostly autobiographical. At verse 27, Paul shift directions to an application of spiritual truths for his readers.

He shifts the focus from our privileges to our obligations ...our responsibilities.

In preparing this message, nearly every commentary said that Paul is telling us that it is our Christian DUTY to live like a Christian should live if we are saved.

I may have looked at ten or twelve commentaries that spoke of our DUTY as a Christian to live as a Christian and each time something in my spirit rebelled against that. We are to live as a Christian ought to live if we are saved, but it goes much deeper than our duty. It is our RESPONSIBILITY; our OBLIGATION as a Christian to live as a Christian should.

You can do your Duty without love, but to live like a Christian should is the response of a heart and life of love. It is our loving Responsibility and our loving obligation to our Lord and Master and Savior to live as we ought to live for Him.

There is an interesting word in Philippians 1:27. It is the word "becometh" – "Live your life as it becometh the Gospel of Christ."

We say that the clothes a person is wearing becomes them- or it does something for them ...or that suit is not them ...or doesn't become them. We mean the color or the cut of the clothes enhances the face or personality of a person. Or we say, "That dress doesn't do a thing for you ...or that suit is not you."

Our life should reflect Jesus Christ. Our lifestyle should become us or enhance us so that others see Jesus reflected in us.

Martin Luther once said that if someone should knock on the door of his heart and asks, "Who lives here?", that he would not reply, "Luther lives here." Rather, he would reply, "Jesus lives here." We must so live that the world would not even question if we belonged to Christ.

Listen as Paul gives his first exhortation in the Book of Philippians.

Read the Passage.

A soldier in the army of Alexander the Great was frequently charged with misconduct. One day the young soldier was brought before Alexander the Great for his disorderly conduct. When he was asked his name, the trembling voice answered, "My name is Alexander, sir." A second time the general

asked, "What is your name?" The reply again came: "My name is Alexander, sir. The same as yours." Alexander the Great shouted at him, "Then change your ways or change your name."

Sometimes Christians are careless about how they live. A young man who was known for his clean living and commitment to Christ was about to begin his first year of college a long way from his home and the influence of his church family. His parents were concerned as to how he would be treated by the other young people on campus, so they warned him that some might make fun of him or not let him be a part of their group. At the end of the first semester he came home for a few days. At the dinner table his parents asked how things went with him. He said, "Everything went great, No one even suspected that I was a Christian!"

An old question has often been asked, "If you were arrested for being a Christian would there be enough evidence to convict you?" We should be a credit to Christ, not a liability.

Paul said that we are to walk worthy of the Gospel of Christ. How do we do that?

I. Stand Firmly Philippians 1:27a

Notice the word "conversation" does not refer to our TALK, but to our WALK ... our conduct. The word might better be translated by the word "citizenship." Note Philippians 3:20.

As Christians we are citizens of two worlds. We are citizens of the earth and we are expected to follow the laws of the land, to be a

good, loyal, up-standing, faithful subject. But we are also citizens of heaven and we are expected to follow heaven's way of living; heaven's standards. We are to be loyal to the Sovereign of Heaven, the Lord of Lords and King of Kings, the Lord Jesus.

The word "becometh" is also translated "worthy." It actually means "of equal weight to." It pictures an ancient scale with a crossbar and a little cup hanging from each end of the crossbar. On one side of the scale is the Gospel with all it stands for. On the other side of the scale is our life. Our life – our lifestyle; our way of living, the way we conduct ourselves – should be equal weight to the expectations

of the Gospel. That is the responsibility, the obligation of every Christian.

And notice "stand fast (firm) in one spirit with one mind."

"To stand firm" means "to stand with tenacity and perseverance." A 104 year old man was being interviewed by a newspaper reporter who asked what he attributed his long life to. He said, "I eat the right food, get plenty of sleep each night, don't fool around, and I never indulge in smoking, alcohol, or chewin'." The reporter replied, "had an uncle like that but he died at fifty-five. How do you explain that?" The man said, "Well, he just didn't keep up his good living long enough." It is important not just that we live right, but that we keep it up.

And we are to stand firm even in times of Discouragement (and you want to quit) ...in times of criticism ... in times of failure (your attitude in the mist of failure is important).

A little boy asked his dad to play ball with him. The boy said, "Dad, you stand down there in the field and I'll hit the ball to you." He said, "I'll be the best hitter in the world."

He threw the ball up, swung and missed and said, "Strike one." He threw it up again, swung and missed and said, "Strike two." He threw it up a third time, swung and missed and said, "Strike three. I'm out." Then he said, "I sure am a good pitcher, ain't I, Daddy."

We ought to stand firm and live lives worthy of the Gospel because the world around us knows only the Gospel it sees in our lives.

You are writing a gospel,

A chapter each day.

By the deeds that you do

And by the words that you say.

Men read what you write

Whether faithless or true:

So what is the gospel

According to you?

Someone else put it like this:

We are the only Bible a careless world will ever read –

We are the sinner's gospel – we are the scoffer's creed.

We are the Lord's last message, written in deed and word.

What if the type is crooked ...What if the print is blurred?

What if our hands are busy with other work than His –

What if our feet are walking where sin's allurements is?

What if our tongues are speaking of things His lips would spurn?

How can we hope to help Him and hasten His return?

A church member said to her pastor, "Our neighbors are getting close to joining a cult with their false gospel. Do you have some literature I can give them?" The pastor opened his Bible to 2 Corinthians 3:2, "You are our letter, written in our hearts, known and read by all men." He said, "The best literature in the world is no substitute for your own life. Let them see Christ in your behavior and this will open up opportunities to share the Gospel of Christ with them."

Live a life that compliments the Gospel.

II. Strive Together Philippians 1:27b-28

Standing fast (firm) doesn't mean standing still. We are to be on the move ... not by ourselves, but together, with one another. The word comes from the field of athletics and means to wrestle together and to wrestle in harmony.

A wonderful picture of this is a football team of eleven men working together as a team in harmony to move the ball toward the goal line. It is an active word.

Notice: It is to be done in ONE SPIRIT AND IN ONE MIND! That means, for the Church, there is to be no division. The devil's motto is "divide and conquer."

The important word is the word "together." Not against.

Sometimes a team has a "glory hound" who has to be in the spotlight and get all the praise. Usually he makes it difficult for the rest of the team. The team isn't working together in harmony, but they are working to make one person look good. It is an attitude that often results in defeat.

Third John 9 mentions a glory hound – Diotrophes was a man "who loved to have the preeminence."

One of the best examples of what it means to strive together in one spirit with one mind comes from World War II. Jimmy Durante, the big-nose comedian was asked to go to a certain place to booster the men's moral by doing a show for them. He was asked to go for a week to entertain them, but his schedule wouldn't let him – he was already obligated. They said, "Then can you go for two days ... for one day ... for one hour?" Finally, he agreed to go for 20 minutes. He said, "I'll do a monologue and I can fly back in time to get on stage."

But when he got there he did a monologue; then another, then another, and another. Finally, drenched with perspiration he came off the stage and the man said, "I thought you were going to be out there only twenty minutes. Why did you stay?" Jimmy said, "Come here and I'll show you." He peeked through the curtains and there on the front row were two soldiers, each in a wheelchair, sitting side by side, neither of them able to applaud on their own. One had a left arm missing; the other had his right arm missing, but together they could applaud the great "Snuzzle," Jimmy Durante. He said, "When I saw those two men, each missing an arm, yet clapping together for me, I couldn't leave."

Notice Philippians 1:28 – "in nothing terrified" pictures a horse that has suddenly been startled. Maybe a snake crawls across its path and the horse is startled and runs away in fear.

God told Joshua, "Be of good courage. Be not afraid. I am with you." And He'll be with us.

Dr. Donald Grey Barnhouse was parked on a street in a large city when he saw a car that weaned through traffic and collided with another car, head on. The driver was apparently drunk. Then Barnhouse saw the passenger pull the man from the driver's seat, got under the wheel himself and listened as the man told the police it was the other driver's fault. Barnhouse stepped forward and told the police what really happened. It was then that people began to gather and said, "Mind your own business. Why do you have to interfere? Leave it to the police, it's their job to work it out, not yours." Barnhouse assured the other driver, "I'll be willing to testify in court if need be."

Christians must have courage. We are not on a playground, but a battlefield.

III. Suffer With Confidence Philippians 1:29-30

Suffering is not God's goof. Sometimes it's God's gift. Notice: "to you it is given.: Ever thought of suffering as God's gift?

Paul received a thorn ... to keep Paul humble, useable, teachable. God uses suffering to develop us into what He wants us to be.

Listen: Anybody can shout "glory" when the family is all well and the bills are all paid, and there's plenty left over to spend. But what if the way is not smooth and easy? What if the way is rough and crooked?

Know what? I've learned that God's grace is sufficient. The only way you can learn that is through suffering, and you'll never learn it apart from suffering.

Stand firm, move ahead, be courageous, be submissive and one day you'll hear Him say, "Well done, good and faithful servant."

Philippians 2:1-8

GETTING ALONG WITH CANTANKEROUS CHRISTIANS

I must admit that the title for the message is not original. I borrowed it from a pastor who had this title for his message printed in the Sunday bulletin. Here is how it read: "Getting Along With Cantankerous Christians (I'm sure we all know a few.)" The pastor said that just before he went into the third service to preach this message, a young boy stopped him in the lobby and asked what he was preaching about. The pastor told him he was preaching on "Getting along with Cantankerous Christians." Then the boy asked, "What does cantankerous mean?" The preacher told him that it means someone who is hard to get along with. Then the pastor asked him, "Do you know anyone like that?" With a grin the boy answered, "Yes sir, me."

Would that we were all so honest. So how do you get along with cantankerous Christians? The answer is, it's not easy.

There is a term that we have heard over and over again during our conflict with Iraq. The term is "friendly fire." Friendly fire is fire that comes, not from the enemy, but from our own weaponry. Through errors or mistakes or misfires, we kill our own soldiers. There's something sad about killing your own soldiers, even when it's by accident. That's a very disheartening and discouraging thing.

And yet, tragically, it has become the order of the day in the army of the Lord Jesus. Too often Christians wound, and sometimes, seriously injure one another.

I don't know if I have ever personally known of a church that was done in by outward attack. I don't personally know of a church or pastor that was destroyed by theological heresy. But I have known many churches that have been rendered totally ineffective by what these verses in Philippians 2:1-4 talk about.

Satan realizes that he is not likely to destroy churches by outward assault or attack, but he will unleash his attacks on the Church through internal strife and succeed.

In these verses Paul tells us that unity is a precious gift of the Spirit. It is to be prized, to be sought, and to be guarded at all cost. When it is lost, it's hard to regain. We have unity in Christ.

Unity is one of those words that the definition doesn't turn you on. You have to experience unity rather than just knowing the meaning of it. It's like the word "kiss." Have you ever read the definition of a kiss?

"A compression of the closed cavity of the mouth with a slight sound when the rounded contact of the lips with another is broken."

Doesn't that sound exciting? If you have ever been a kisser or a "kisssee", you know a kiss is a lot different than the dictionary definition. You've got to experience it to know what it is. Only when you experience unity can you know its beauty and wonder.

There is something about a united church that attracts everyone's attention. A united church is able to withstand a mountain of hardships. There is harmony, contentment, togetherness and cohesiveness. Disunity, on the other hand, brings discontent, discord, strife and stress.

Paul's desire for the Colossians (Colossians 2:2) was that their hearts might be "knit together in love." When something is knit together, the harder you pull on it, the more oneness you see and the stronger it gets.

The Psalmist says in Psalm 133:1: "Behold, how good and how pleasant it is for brethren to dwell together in unity."

Three things I want to share with you about unity from this passage:

I. The Resources for Unity Philippians 2:1

Paul begins with a reminder of what God has done for us. The verse contains four "if" statements. Those "ifs" do not express doubt; rather, they actually express a certainty – "If such-and-such is true – and I know it is ..."

The "ifs" of verse one express truths that the Philippians would readily assent to:

- Yes, they had been encouraged by their union with Christ.
- Yes, they had experienced God's love.
- Yes, they had enjoyed the fellowship of God's Spirit.
- Yes, they had received an outpouring of mercy from God.

Paul says, "Well, then, it shouldn't be unexpected for us to ask that you maintain the unity God has given you." All Christian duties should flow naturally from God's kindness to us. God is not saying, "Do this and I will bless you," but rather, "I have blessed you, now do this."

II. The Requirements for Unity Philippians 2:2

Paul give us the three-fold requirement for unity. The various phrases in this verse are very close in their meaning. Paul piles up phrase upon phrase to show the Philippians what he has in mind. He repeats himself several times to make sure his listeners get the point.

True Christian unity means a deep sharing together.

1. The Shared Mind "Being like-minded."

Being like-minded touches what we believe. Unity begins with a shared statement of faith. Doctrine matters. We must emphasize those historic Christian truths that form the foundation of our faith – such doctrines as the Trinity of God, the inerrancy of Scripture, the deity of Christ, the bodily resurrection of Christ. These things are non-negotiable because they have joined true Christians together across the centuries.

How should we relate to Christians who do not see things exactly as we do? Let me give you three quick answers to that questions.

A. We should major on what we have in common.

B. We should respect their right to disagree.

C. We should hold our convictions in love.

2. The Shared Heart "Having the same love."

This touches how we feel about each other.

3. The Shared Soul "Being one in Spirit."

This teaches us how we relate to each other. This has the idea of such a deep unity that our souls are "unanimous" in their love and respect for each other. A. T. Robertson says that where we have this kind of unity, we will be "like clocks that strike at the same moment."

Remember Church, we're all in this together. When one wins, we all win. When anyone loses, we all lose. In God's family there are no bench-warmers. We all have a role to play.

Matthew 18:19 reminds us of the incredible power of this kind of unity: "I say unto you, that if two of you shall agree on earth as touching anything that they shall ask, it shall be done for them of my Father which is in heaven." When our hearts reach deep agreement regarding God's will, God says "Amen" from heaven.

III. The Results of Unity Philippians 2:3-4

The final two verses of our text tell us about the attitude that both lead to unity and spring from unity.

A. A New Attitude Toward Others

1. There will be no more selfish ambitions.

There will be no strife or competitive spirit that destroys unity by dividing the church into groups, cliques, or factions.

2. There will be no more vain conceit or arrogance that causes pain to others.

B. A New Attitude Toward Yourself

1. There will be true humility or "lowliness of mind" (KJV).

The word means to have a proper estimate of yourself so that there is no need for self-promotion.

2. There will be a new estimation of others.

You will begin to grow spiritually as you think less of your abilities and more of your imperfections. It will keep you balanced.

The theme of a church walking in unity is OTHERS. Jesus first, others second, self last.

We used to sing the song: "Others."

Lord, help me live from day to day in such a self-forgetful way

That even when I kneel to pray, my prayer shall be for others.

Others, Lord, yes, others. Let this my motto be.

Help me to live for others, that I may live like Thee.

I want us to be a friendly church; but more, I want us to be a church of friends. Let's pray for each other, lift up each other, care for each other, and be there for each other.

Philippians 2:5-11

THERE'S NOBODY LIKE JESUS

Who is Jesus Christ? Of all the questions that might be posed to man, none is more important than this. This is the central question of history. Who is Jesus Christ? Where did He come from? Why did He come? And what difference did His coming make in my life?

In the end, every person must deal with Jesus Christ. No one can escape Him. No one can escape Him! You can't avoid the question. Sooner or later you must answer the question.

It's certainly not a new question. It's as old as the coming of Christ to the earth. Once when Jesus took His disciples on a retreat to a place called Caesarea Philippi, He asked them, "Who do men say that I am?" They offered four responses: John the Baptist, Elijah, Jeremiah, or one of the prophets (Matthew 16:13-16).

There are three great and glorious Christological statements in the New Testament.

A. The greatest is probably Hebrews 1, which gives over 30 different statements about the Person and work of the Lord Jesus. Mark them as I read part of them:

- Hebrews 1:2 – His Son; He has been appointed heir of all things; He made the worlds.
- Hebrews 1:3 – He is the brightness of the Father's glory; He is the express image of the Father's Person; He upholds all things by the Word of His power; He purged our sins by Himself; He sat down on the right side of the Father's throne.
- Hebrews 1:4 – He is much better than the angels, He is more excellent than the angels.
- Hebrews 1:6 – All the angels worship Him.
- Hebrews 1:9 – He loves righteousness and hates iniquity; the Father has anointed Him with the oil of gladness.

B. The second Christological passage is Colossians 1. Mark these as I read:

- Colossians 1:12 – Christ has made us fit to be partakers of His inheritance.
- Colossians 1:13 – He delivered us from the power of darkness; He translated us into the kingdom.
- Colossians 1:14 – He redeemed us through His blood; He forgave our sins.
- Colossians 1:15 – He is the image of the invisible God; He is the firstborn of every creature.
- Colossians 1:16 – He created all things that were created in heaven and in earth; all things were created for Him.

- Colossians 1:17 – He was here before all things and He holds all things together.
- Colossians 1:18 – He is the Head of the Church, the first to be resurrected from the dead, and

He is preeminent above all things.

- Colossians 1:20 – He made peace between Holy God and sinful man through the blood of His cross.

The third statement about the Person and work of Christ in the New Testament is found here in Philippians 2:5-11. Three things I want to share with you from this passage:

I. The Challenge Philippians 2:5

What does it mean to have the mind of Christ? Well, he is not saying that we are to have the mental capacity of the Lord Jesus. He is not talking about the Intelligence of the Lord Jesus; he is talking about our Lord's Attitude – His Spirit; His Demeanor; His approach to life.

He is not saying, "Be as smart as the Lord Jesus;" he is saying have the same Spirit of Christ, the same approach to life as Christ. Act like Jesus.

Well, what was our Lord's approach to life? Others – others – others! Our attitude toward others will determine how we see things in life and will also determine our usefulness to the Lord as we walk through this life. Every day and in every way have the mind, the Spirit, the attitude of Christ.

How do we develop that attitude?

1. Remember who you are: sons and daughters of God.
2. Remember Whose you are: His power is available to each of us who belong to Him.

II. The Copy (Example) Philippians 2:6-8

Let's go back to the original question: Who is Jesus? How does your answer stack up with the Bible? It is not enough to say, "I believe in Jesus." Millions of people claim to believe in Jesus who don't have a clue about what the Bible says about Him.

These verses comprise a short course in Christology. Nearly all the truth about Christ is found in these verses – His eternal preexistence as God, His voluntary taking on of human flesh, His coming to earth as a servant, His humiliating death on the cross, and His exaltation in heaven.

A. What He Was Philippians 2:6

Paul began by stressing the eternal preexistence of Jesus Christ as God. Before Jesus came to earth, He existed as God in heaven – John 1:1.

Paul declares the Deity of Christ in His Pre-existent state. He existed in eternity past in the form of God. The word "form" does not mean shape, but has to do with the inner character.

Jesus was in all eternity past equal with the Father in all His attributes. He was not simply LIKE God, He was the very nature and substance – God.

"Form" means "the real essence of a thing." Jesus possessed "the specific character of God." Whatever it is that makes God God, Jesus possessed that same essence. Whatever you can say about God, you can also say about Jesus. He WAS and IS 100 per cent God and nothing less.

He did not think it "robbery to be equal with God." Jesus didn't have to steal something from God the Father to become God. Christ and the Father were the same in every sense – strength, holiness, character, and knowledge.

But here is the remarkable thing: He did not try to hold on to His glory, but willingly laid it aside when He voluntarily traveled the distance between heaven and the bloody cross. He did it willingly, gladly, and without hesitation.

B. What He Became Philippians 2:7-8a

Theologians call this the "incarnation" – "God coming to the earth in human flesh.

He “made Himself (nothing) of no reputation (some translations say, 'He emptied Himself')." Jesus made a very personal decision and choice. It was not forced upon Him. It was a voluntary act – He became man! Christ surrendered that which He loved in order that He might serve those whom He loved. He did not try to grasp or hold on to the outward manifestation of His deity.

Imagine a general taking off his uniform and dressing as a man on the street. You wouldn't know the difference. Is he still a general? Yes. Is he in uniform? No. Christ came wearing the uniform of a common man while bearing within Himself the high rank of Almighty God!

Jesus was born as a man, He lived as a man. He suffered as a man, and He died as a real genuine, human man. He knew pain, poverty, sorrow, loneliness, and rejection. He knew laughter, hope, and friendship. He knew every aspect of human existence, yet He knew no sin.

He took “the very nature of a servant.” That is, He entered humanity at its lowest level – as a humble slave. Notice again the word “form.” He didn't merely appear as a servant, He took on Himself all that a servant is and does. He didn't stop being God when He became a servant. He “put on” servant-hood without “putting off” Godhood. He laid aside His outward glory without laying aside His deity.

He appeared “in human likeness.” He became a man fully and truly without ceasing to be God. The word “likeness” means that to all outward appearances He was merely a man, but in reality He was more than a man. He was God in human flesh.

He was “found in appearance as a man.” He didn't look any different from anyone else. He was a man – but the rest of His identity was hidden from view.

He was the “God-man.” He was as much God as God is God, and He was as much man as man is man.

C. What He Chose Philippians 2:8b

The cross was the depth of Christ's humiliation. He came from the top and went to the bottom rung of the ladder. No one was ever higher, no one will ever go lower that He did.

Jesus became obedient to His Father. The death of Jesus on the cross was no accident. It was God's plan from before the foundation of the world.

See Mark 10:45; Hebrews 2:9, 14; 5:8; 10:5, 9a

III. The Consequences (What He Gain) Philippians 2:9-11

Having returned to heaven in triumph, God “highly exalted Him.” That phrase means that God gave Him back all that He relinquished when He left heaven to come to earth. In this case it means that He gained something He did not have before. He gained something because He came back to heaven with something He didn't have before: His humanity. He left the Son of God and returned the Son of God and the Son of Man. We now have a Man in heaven, Christ Jesus, Who is our Advocate and Friend.

Verse 9 also tells us that God gave Him “the Name that is above every name.” What did God give Him that He didn't have before?

- He couldn't give Him Supreme glory – He already had that.
- He couldn't give Him deity – He already had that.

But there is one thing He didn't have that He now has by virtue of His triumphant return to heaven. God has ordained that eventually He will be universally recognized as the Lord of heaven and earth. Many people didn't recognize Him when He walked on earth. People today still don't know Who He is. But a day is coming when that will change forever.

When that day finally arrives, “every knee will bow” and “every tongue will confess that Jesus Christ is Lord.” It will be universal – all creatures “in heaven and on earth and under the earth,” that includes Satan and his demons. Every knee will bow in submission.

Here is your choice:

- You can confess Him now with joy as your Lord and Savior;
- Or, you will someday confess Him as Lord in shame and terror.

REDEEMED RESPONSIBILITIES

Look back at the last part of Philippians 2:12 – “work out your own salvation ...”

Baptists get nervous around verses like this. We don't like the words “salvation: and “work” to be too close together. But we need to remember that there are three phases of our salvation.

1. Salvation involves our Past, our Present and our Future.
2. We were saved ...we are being saved ...we shall be saved.

There is what we might call our Initial salvation and involves Regeneration and Justification.

We are right to stay away from works in our Initial salvation.

- Ephesians 2:8-9: “For by grace are you saved through faith ... not of works lest any man should boast.”

- Titus 3:5: “Not by works of righteousness which we have done, but according to His mercy He saved us.”

We are saved – not because of what we DO, but because of what He has DONE!!

On the basis of what Christ did on the cross, God declares those who trust Him to be forgiven, to be reconciled, to be adopted, to be justified, to be right with Him and clean before Him. We cannot earn, nor do we deserve that; we can only humbly accept it by faith.

Initial Salvation is followed by Continual Salvation or Sanctification where God works out in our lives the holy nature imparted in regeneration.

Then when we die and enter the Heavenly Jerusalem and our spirits are made perfect (Hebrews 12:23). We experience Final Salvation, or Glorification.

Works have no place in Initial Salvation, but they do in Continual Salvation. The Bible teaches that good works – goodness of character and goodness of life – are the Product,

the Results, the Outcome, the Fruit – of true conversion. James said it this way: “Faith without works is dead.”

Salvation is not a faith in works, but it is a faith that works. Works are the evidence of true salvation.

- Matthew 7:16-20
- I John 2:3-5

But Paul declared that the Lord Jesus not only saves us FROM something, He also saves us FOR something.

- Ephesians 2:8-10 – “unto good works”
- Titus 3:5, 8; 2:14
- 2 Peter 1:2-8

Three things I want to share with you:

I. The Mandate Philippians 2:12

Look carefully at that verse and let me tell you what it does NOT say.

- It does not say, “Work FOR your salvation.”
- It does not say, “Work AT your salvation.”
- It does not say, “Work TOWARD your salvation.”
- It says to “Work OUT your salvation.”

A lot of people believe in a “self-help” salvation. Their thinking goes something like this: God's standard is 100 percent

righteousness, but He knows that man will never attain it, so God is content to accept less, say 41 percent or 63 percent, and God just wants to see that we're trying ... doing the best we can! The idea that man can earn at least part of his salvation is very attractive to man, because it appeals to his ego.

Some people say, "I never accept anything that I haven't earned or deserved." My response is, "You didn't earn the gift of life itself. You don't deserve the very breath you breathe, and it would be impossible for you to survive outside the provisions of God."

Other folks say, "I would like to become a Christian, but I know I can't live the Christian life and I'm not going to be a hypocrite." None of us can live the Christian life on our own, but let me give you a great truth: When you become a Christian, God puts something inside of you to help you to live as God wants you to live.

There is something inside of you if you are a Christian that was put there by God. What is it?

Well, it is called by a number of names. In the Bible it is referred to as the heavenly gift ... the divine nature ... the new birth ... eternal life ... salvation.

What God put inside you when you became a Christian was Himself! When you became a Christian, God took up residence in your life.

If God does not live inside you, then you are not a Christian.

- Paul said it like this: "Christ in you, the hope of glory" (Colossians 1:27).
- John said it like this: "Greater is He that is in you, than he that is in the world"

(I John 4:4).

- Philippians 1:13: "For it is God which worketh in you."

God doesn't live inside everyone. He doesn't live inside those who have never opened their heart to Him and received Him.

But let me remind you, Paul is not talking about Initial Salvation here. He is talking about Continual Salvation.

Let me ask a very important question: Who is really responsible for a believer's spiritual growth? Each one of us!

- I Timothy 4:7
- Philippians 2:12

There is an Indwelling, but there is to be an Outworking.

That work "work out" is an interesting word. It means "to carry out to the goal, to accomplish, to carry something through to its fullest purpose." It was used in several ways in Paul's day:

1. It was used in mining camps.

If someone were to give you a gold mine of incalculable wealth, you would have a treasure, but the gold would do you no practical good unless you worked it out of the mine.

2. It was used of farmers.

We say, "We are going to work out the garden." We mean that we are going to do whatever is necessary inside that garden so that that garden will produce its maximum harvest.

"Work out your own salvation." You have a great treasure inside you ... of great value ... And you have the responsibility of working it out; of getting the greatest good from it.

- a. The Responsibility is Personal

– It is "your own salvation." It's my salvation. I can't work out your salvation and you can't work out my salvation.

– If I don't mine out my own salvation, I will never benefit from what has been placed inside of me by God.

- b. The Responsibility is Perpetual

The Greek construction means to continue to work it out. It never ends.

II. The Manner Philippians 2:12

“With fear and trembling.” This is not fright or terror, but humility and vigilance. It is the proper sense of awe and responsibility. With Reverence – Respect – Obedience.

Some words are harder to take than others. For instance, love, joy and peace aren't half as hard to live with as obedience, responsibility and discipline. But all of them have their place in the Christian vocabulary.

It means to recognize who God is and who we are ... that we are weak and He is All-powerful and we must totally depend on Him. It means to always be alert to the things of the Spirit, fully tuned into the things of God, totally committed to His ways or we might miss something that God wants to do in and through us.

The truth is that most of us do as little with the great treasure inside of us as we can get by with and we are the loser. But when we do our best and apply ourselves the best we can, we are the winners.

I heard about a little white-framed country church that really needed painting. One of the members was a house painter and he told the people that he would donate his time after hours and at night to save the church some money. He decided to put paint thinner in the paint to save the church even more money.

When the sun came up, the members got their first look at the new paint job. The paint was so thin, the old dirt could be seen below the surface. Since he worked in the dark, there were several places he missed. The church looked worse than it did before it was pointed.

The congregation met in business meeting to decide what to do. They all decided to send a written communication. And, since it was a church, they felt it should be in spiritual language. A five word letter was sent that read, “Repaint, and thin no more.”

I wonder if most of the spiritual gold is still inside of us because we've thinned down our spiritual mining?

III. The Merit Philippians 2:13

The word “work” in verse 12 is not the same word for “work” in verse 13. The word “work” in verse 13 is the word “to energize.”

- God is our energizer; my energy.
- He energizes both my desire and my deeds. The desire and the deed belong to God ... both the Prompting and the Performing belong to God.

God has worked in us. He is still working in us. He will continue to work in us. We are to work with healthy reverence and respect so that we might realize all the benefit of all God has done and is doing for us. We must cooperate with God.

One of my favorite illustrations of this cooperative partnership between God and man is the story of a farmer who was once visited by his pastor. The pastor looked at the farm and said, “John, this is a great farm you and God have.” “Thank you,” said John. “But you should have seen it when God had it all by Himself.”

The farmer meant no disrespect. He was simply acknowledging the way God works – through us. He will not do for us what we should be doing ourselves. As we cooperate with Him we will see our potential realized.

He may be working in you to confess to that fellow Christian that you were unkind in your speech or action. Work it out.

He may be working in you to give up some questionable practice. Work it out.

He may be working in you to make your home a sweeter, kinder, more pleasant place for your family. Work it out.

God will not work apart from you, but He wants to work through you. Let's yield to Him, and let this be the day when you begin to live in the power of the Indwelling One.

Philippians 2:14-18

SHINE AS LIGHTS IN THE WORLD

Look again at that phrase in verse 15b: “Shine as lights in the world.” Now remember what Jesus said in John 8:12: “I am the light of

the world.” Then in Matthew 5:14, 16: “You are the light of the world ...Let your light so shine before men, that they may see your good works and glorify your Father in heaven.”

Notice what else Paul says in verse 15: We live “in the midst of a crooked and perverse generation.” Verse 16: “This world is dark, so hold fast – shine out – the word of life so others can see.”

We use to sing:

“This little light of mine, I'm gonna let it shine,
This little light of mine, I'm gonna let it shine,

Let it shine, let it shine, let it shine.

Put it under a bushel? No! I'm going to let it shine!” ...

This world in which we live is crooked and perverse by God's standards. We are IN this world, but we are not to be OF this world; just as a boat is IN the water, but not OF the water.

The world has its goals and the Christian has his goal. What are the world's goals? Things like: pleasure, success, sex, money, popularity, and power. What are the Christians' goals? Things like: submission to God, to be blameless in the sight of God, to be blameless before others, to live as Christ would have us live.

Well, how are we to do that?

I. All Complaining Should be Discarded Philippians 2:14

Paul gives two evidences that God is working in us:

A. Reverence is evidence of God working in us.

How do we know if God is really indwelling and working in us? One of the ways we know God is working in us is that we have a sense of reverence for God. Look back up in verse 12: “Work out your salvation with fear and trembling.”

What is reverence in this case? It means fearing God, not having a terror of who God is, but living a life of caution because of the greatness and power of God. Reverence comes to each of us when we see the greatness of God and how small we are compared to Him.

You may not have seen the Grand Canyon in person, but most of us have seen a picture of the Grand Canyon with maybe a man standing near the Canyon. When you see the beauty and grandeur of the Canyon compared to man, you think, “What a mighty, creative majesty our God is” and there is reverence for His ability to create such a huge scene for us. I don't know about all the greatness of God, but I know enough about the greatness and power of God that I'm afraid to live my life in disobedience to God because I know and I have seen His power and His might.

B. Harmony is evidence of God working in us Philippians 2:14

Paul didn't say, “Try to do most things without grumbling or disputing.” That would be more realistic and I could give that a try, but All Things? Everything?

“Murmuring” is one of those curious words that sounds like what it is describing. They have a sound of those things they represent, like “hiss”, “buzz”, “hum”, “murmur.” When one murmurs it sounds like “mm...mm...mum.”

Murmuring is when we are whispering in the corners; when we whine. Grumbling folks always see the negative side of everything. Murmuring is not out-and-out complaining, but grumbling people are unhappy people, they always feel like they are being cheated. They highlight the negative traits of others. They are always ready to pick a fight. For some reason these folks feel better about themselves when they can complain about others. They aren't very happy people and it comes out in what they say.

Grumbling people are annoying people. These folks have the marvelous ability to suck the life out of any party. After you talk to a grumbling person for very long, you feel exhausted. A complainer has a tendency to “infect” everyone around them. Nothing is ever good enough for a complainer. A complainer is like a cancer. They spread their venom wherever they go. They like to play the part of

martyr. They feel like no one likes them; and for the most part, they're right. Murmuring is always associated with rebellion and is always a sign of discontent. It's not something a spirit-filled person will do.

Have you found a negative person can take up more of your energy and more of your time than a hundred positive people? I think

that's why some people are negative, because they know they get attention by being that way.

The classic example comes from the Israelites as Moses tried to lead them through the wilderness. The first great problem in the Church came because two groups of women were murmuring that one group felt like the other group was getting more attention than they were. That was the reason for deacons – to put down the murmuring.

What is it about us that likes to stir things up and get things started? It's almost like we can't endure peace and tranquility for too long. We've got to get a rise out of folks and create a little conflict. "Do all things without murmuring;" without an unhappy spirit.

"And Disputing." Without debating, quarreling, argument.

A little old lady walked into a department store one day and was surprised when a band began to play and an executive pinned an orchid on her dress and handed her a crisp \$100 bill. She was the store's millionth customer. Television cameras were focused on her and reporters began interviewing her. "Tell me," one asked, "just what did you come here for today?"

The lady hesitated for a minute and then sheepishly answered, "I was on my way to the Complaint Department." How embarrassing!

But I wonder, if there had been a secret video camera recording your life this past week, how much grumbling would have been captured on film? Maybe you even came to church like that lady went to the department store, ready to air your complaints or to give someone a piece of your mind. But God meets you at the door and pins His Word on you: "Do all things without grumbling or disputing, that you may be blameless and innocent, a child of God above reproach in the midst of this crooked and perverse generation, among whom you shine forth as a light in the world." Grumble, grumble – NOT!

II. Christ's Character Should Be Displayed Philippians 2:15

Someone said, "Our character is revealed by what we STAND for, by what we FALL for, and by what we LIE for." Too many of us stand for nothing, fall for anything, and lie about everything.

Three things will help us to shine out as lights. We are to be:

A. Blameless

Blameless doesn't mean perfect because we all have flaws, but we are to be working on our flaws. We are to so live that no one can point a finger at us and say, "You wronged me and made no attempt to make it right." We are to be above reproach.

B. Harmless

The word harmless means to be innocent, pure, and without mixture. We are to be aboveboard in our dealings with others. We are not to say one thing and do another. We are not to misrepresent truth or keep part of the truth back. We are not to have mixed motives.

C. Without Rebuke

We are to be blameless and harmless in our dealings with man. We are not to be part of the problem, but part of the solution.

III. The Contentment We Will Develop Philippians 2:16-18

Paul had a stake in the Philippians and the Philippians had a stake in him. He knew he would see those he won to the Lord in heaven and he wanted those he had won to win others to the Lord.

Will anyone be in heaven because of you? Is your life the kind of life that lifts men to God or pushes them away from God?

"Shine as lights in this world!"

Philippians 2:19-24 **TIMOTHY: PAUL'S SON IN THE FAITH**

It's easy to forget that the great Apostle Paul needed friends – special friends.

- Paul had a lot of physical problems, so he needed someone like Dr. Luke.
- Being limited in strength and unable to handle the vigors of extensive travel alone, he needed Barnabas and Silas to help him.

- Sometimes he was in prison and needed someone like Epaphroditus to deliver the letters he had written to the churches.
- On several occasions he needed someone to actually write the letters out for him.

On several occasions Paul listed his “circle of friends.”

In the world of basketball a team is only as good as its bench. If you don't have a good sixth or seventh man that can substitute for a starting player when the starting player gets tired or fouls out of the game, your team is in trouble. Your team is only as good as the depth of your bench.

You can't be two places at the same time, but Paul had men on his ministry team that he could delegate important task to. Timothy is mentioned 24 times in Paul's letters and is identified with Paul in the writing of five letters. In fact, Timothy is mentioned in the opening verse of this letter to Phillipi.

Who was Timothy?

He was a native of southern Asia Minor, which is called Turkey today. He was a child of a mixed marriage. His mother was Jewish, Eunice, and his father is an unnamed Greek. It was difficult growing up as a half-breed. Both the Jews and the other Gentiles despised the Greeks. So Timothy grew up knowing the hostility of all people.

Yet, when Timothy was very young, he gave his heart completely to the Lord Jesus and he was totally committed to Christ. He was saved on Paul's first missionary journey. His mother, Eunice, and his grandmother, Lois, trained him in the Scriptures.

The name “Timothy” means “He who honors God.” This he did. He was content being a servant of the “second man.” His one desire was to serve the Lord Jesus by serving Paul.

Five years after Paul went on his first missionary journey, he went back through the same cities on his second missionary journey and he heard reports of how Timothy had grown in the Lord and the influence he was having for Christ. It was then that Paul added Timothy to his missionary team.

Four things I want you to see about Timothy from this passage:

I. His companionship with Paul Philippians 2:19-20

Paul had great confidence in Timothy. He was trustworthy and faithful. When Paul said Timothy was “like-minded,” he meant that he and Timothy were kindred spirits. They were the same in soul, spirit, and mind. They both had the same heart and passion. They thought alike. They had a oneness of Spirit. They desired to accomplish the same goals. They had the same purpose.

I think of the relationship of Jonathan and David when I think of Paul and Timothy. The Bible says, “The soul of Jonathan was knit to the soul of David” (1 Samuel 18:1).

Let me remind you that Timothy was very, very young when he trusted Christ, but he began to grow and mature in Christ at that young age. God needs young people to commit to Him at an early age.

Ecclesiastes 12:1: “Remember now your Creator in the days of your youth.”

II. His Concern for Others Philippians 2:19-20

The word “state” or “condition” is used twice. Then he speaks of Timothy's “natural care” or “sincere care.” Timothy had a genuine concern, care, and compassion for other people.

The real measure of a man's greatness is not the number of slaves he has serving him, but how many he serves.

When the televangelist Jim Baker celebrated his fifth Christmas in prison, Franklin Graham sent this word to him: “I want to help you when you get out.” (Maybe with a job, a house to live in, a car to drive.) Baker thought it was all over for him and he said, “Franklin, you can't do this. It will hurt you. The Grahams don't need my baggage.” Graham responded, “Jim, you were my friend in the past and you are my friend now.”

On the first Sunday Baker was out, Ruth Graham called the halfway house at the Salvation Army where he was staying. He had only been out of prison for 48 hours and she made plans to meet him at church. The Pastor welcomed them and there were two whole rows of Grahams. When the organ began to play, one seat was open next to Baker and Ruth Graham came and sat beside him. After the service Ruth invited him to lunch at their cabin. That's concern for those who are down.

One day a man went to the White House to see Abe Lincoln. Only his son was at the White House, but he told the man he could find

his dad at a railway station. The man said, "I've never met Mr. Lincoln. How will I know him?" The son answered, "If you go to the station, look for a tall, homely man who is helping someone. You'll know that's my father."

III. His Consecration to the Lord Philippians 2:21-22

The word "proof" means that Timothy put Jesus first under trials and testings and was shown to have a tried and approved character. He has proven to be faithful, loyal, genuine, and pure. He is not a quitter. You can rely on him.

IV. His Commitment to the Gospel Philippians 2:23-24

Timothy had learned the secret of Philippians 2:3-4. Sharing the Gospel is one thing; living out the Gospel is another. Learn to serve others before yourself.

A pastor dreamed he had been given the opportunity to see both Heaven and Hell. He was ushered to a closed door and was informed that Hell was on the other side of the door. As he entered the door, he was surprised to see a banquet hall set for a feast. Everything was beautiful, but all the diners moaned and wailed in agony. At the side of each person was a large fork strapped to one arm and a large knife strapped to the other arm. The fork and knife was long enough to dish out the food, but too long to put it in one's mouth. Thus, the people were unable to eat and were starving and shrieking with hunger pains. The terror was more than the Pastor could bear, so he asked to leave.

When he opened the door leading to Heaven, he was terrified to see the same scene. Everything was the same, only languishing had been replaced with laughter and joy. Those in Heaven did not moan because they could not feed themselves. Instead, they used their long forks to feed one another. There is joy in serving others.

Philippians 2:29-30

EPAPHRODITUS: A LITTLE – KNOWN SAINT

The poet said, "No one is an island." Paul said it this way: "No man lives to himself and no man dies to himself." In other words, we need each other. We need someone to lift us when we are down. We need someone to encourage us when we are discouraged; someone to correct us when we are wrong. We all need friends who are trustworthy and faithful and true. We need someone to stand with us and support us.

Paul's friends were valuable to him and to the ministry that God had called him to. Friends like: Aquila and Priscilla, Silas and Barnabas, Timothy and Titus, Luke and John Mark, Tychicus and Onesiphorus. And friends like Epaphroditus, that we are going to look at today.

These were just ordinary men and women, with like passions such as we are. They were not super-spiritual men of God – not half-human and half-angel – but ordinary folks like you and me who loved God and served Him.

When you think of the great names of the Bible, Epaphroditus would not be on anyone's list. He was not a great leader, or a king, or a preacher. He wrote nothing in Scripture. He was a layman and a faithful member of the church at Philippi.

His only claim to fame is that he was a servant of the Lord; and had it not been for his association with the Apostle Paul, his name would have never been remembered in history. And, yet, the Holy Spirit of God reaches down and selects this man, Epaphroditus. Why? I think it may be to teach us the importance and the value God places on folks who are never in the limelight, but who love God and love His Church, and who serves the Lord among his brothers and sisters in Christ.

In A.D. 62 when the church at Philippi heard that Paul was in prison at Rome, they wanted to do something for him. They took up a collection and, of all the people they could have selected to deliver the gift to Paul, they selected Epaphroditus. His name only appears twice in the Bible, both times in the Book of Philippians.

The church intended for Epaphroditus to stay with Paul and to be his personal servant for a while. Epaphroditus thought it a privilege to be selected. Although he was placing himself in danger by being associated with Paul, he gladly assumed his assignment of the six-week, 800-mile journey to Rome.

But while he was in Rome, Epaphroditus became gravely ill. Someone took the news of his illness back to Philippi and the church expressed great anxiety about his condition. Paul made the decision to send him back to Philippi and to carry this Philippian letter back to the church with him. Paul also sent him back with a wonderful recommendation.

What kind of Christian was Epaphroditus?

I. A Stable Christian Philippians 2:25

Paul gave Epaphroditus three titles:

A. My Brother in the Family

Timothy was Paul's son in the faith; Epaphroditus was Paul's brother in the family. The word means "one who came from the same (spiritual) womb." With God as their Father, they are brothers and equal members of God's family.

I like the song that says, "You may notice we say brother and sister around here. That's because we're a family with loved ones so dear." Sometimes we sing, "I'm so glad I'm a part of the family of God." Listen, we have a family reunion every Sunday and every Wednesday night. We're a church family.

"Brother" is one of Paul's favorite terms of endearment for the saints. He used it nine times in this short letter. Brotherhood comes because we belong to Christ.

B. My Fellow-worker in the Field

When Jesus makes us part of His family, He gives us a responsibility. We are not just a worker, but a fellow-worker.

The KJV uses the words, "companion in labour." The phrase pictures two workers in a field. We work together toward the same goal and we seek to accomplish the same task. We assist one another to get the job done. We are not spectators in the Kingdom of God, but fellow-workers working alongside one another.

C. My Fellow-soldier in the Fight

When we are saved, we gain a great Savior, but we also gain a great enemy, and we are engaged in a great spiritual warfare.

II. A Serving Christian Philippians 2:25

The word "messenger" means one sent with an assignment. Epaphroditus was sent, not only to bring a gift to Paul, but to BE A GIFT to Paul.

Epaphroditus had been sent as a representative of the church in Philippi. They couldn't all come to assist Paul in prison because of the distance (about 800 miles) and the time involved, but he was there on their behalf and was their official representative. What Epaphroditus did in Rome would reflect on the church in Philippi.

We are in this world – this community – as representatives of Jesus. Others will judge Him by what they see in us.

III. A Sensitive Christian Philippians 2:26-28

Epaphroditus became ill; "sick nigh unto death." He was at death's door, "but God had mercy on him." Notice that Paul said that when God healed Epaphroditus, that He not only had mercy on Epaphroditus, but that He had mercy on him (Paul) too. If Epaphroditus had died while ministering to him, it would have caused him great heaviness of heart.

"Was this divine healing?" I don't believe there is any other kind! I thank God for doctors and nurses. God uses their knowledge and abilities and skills, but in the final analysis, all healing is divine.

Paul, on occasions, had the ability to heal, but it is interesting that Paul did not heal Epaphroditus. God had mercy on him and he was made well. Paul didn't heal him, but he prayed for him and God chose to heal him.

IV. A Sacrificing Christian Philippians 2:29-30

That little phrase, "not regarding his own life" is also translated "risking or gambling his life." There are those who are asked of God to do something that puts their life at risk. They have a high level of allegiance to the Lord. Their life is given over to pleasing the Lord. God uses those kinds of folks to be examples to us; to inspire us and to spur us on.

In Philippians 2:29 Paul says, "When he returns, receive him with honor and gladness. It has not been easy for him. He did not want to return so quickly. He was no quitter. He had already risked his life, but I sent him back."

I pray that all of us will have a royal reception one day – not in Philippi, but in Glory! It won't be a brief exchange of greeting, but a blessed eternity of glory. "It will be worth it all when we see Jesus!"

Philippians 3:1-9

JESUS CHRIST: THE ONLY WAY TO SALVATION

Listen to the question that the Rich Young Ruler asked the Lord Jesus: “Good Master, what good thing must I do to inherit eternal life?”

Listen to the question the Philippian jailer asked Paul: “Sirs, what must I do to be saved?”

Well, what does a man have to do to be saved? Some folks go about trying to be saved in the wrong way. There is only one right way to be saved according to the Bible. How can I be sure what the right way is?

Paul admits that for years he was doing the wrong things to be saved. He thought he was doing the right things. He tried to keep the Law. He tried to be faithful. He thought he was doing what was right. Then listen to what he said in Philippians 3:7-8: “I now consider everything I have done in the past to gain salvation as loss, as profitless, as compared to the surpassing greatness of knowing Jesus Christ personally through faith as My Lord, for whose sake I have lost all things. I count what I was doing before to gain salvation as rubbish or dung or sewage in my eyes compared with the privilege of knowing Christ my Lord.”

Now why would a man use such words to describe his own past life? Isn't he being harsh? Is he using exaggeration to get the reader's attention? Or does he mean it?

Paul discovered the right way to be saved and he shares it with the church at Philippi. Four things we see about Paul in these verses. We see:

I. What Paul Desired Philippians 3:1

The first word in Philippians 3:1 is “finally.” If there is any doubt as to whether Paul is a Baptist preacher, this should settle it. He says, “Finally,” yet he is only half through with what he wants to say to the folks at Philippi. He still has 44 verses to go! He still has two more chapters!

“Finally, but not immediately!” If it was alright for Paul to preach that way, it ought to be alright for me, too!

Actually, the word “finally” here means “as for the rest” or “so now.” He is saying, “As for the rest, my brethren, nothing remains but to rejoice in the Lord.”

May I remind you that the words “joy” or “rejoice” is used 19 times in this little book? But the name “Jesus” is used 20 times. Put those two together and the book is about “The Joy of Jesus.”

Then Paul says, “For me to write the same things to you is not irksome or tedious to me, but it is safe for you.” The word “safe” helps form our English word “asphalt” and means “firm or that which can be relied upon. It is certain or true.” Paul says, “I don't mind repeating these truths to you because it gives you something firm to stand on.”

II. What Paul Denounced Philippians 3:2

Paul uses the word “beware” three times in Verse 2. The passage begins with a stern word of warning. Evidently there were a group of Jews who were false teachers who followed Paul around and had infiltrated the Church of Philippi and tried to mislead and deceive those new Christians and Paul wanted to make sure the congregation knew how to handle them. In Verse 2 he uses three exceedingly harsh terms to describe these false teachers.

Paul tells them, “Christians, be alert at all times. Be on your toes, be on your guard, be cautious. Keep your eyes open for Dogs, and Evil Workers, and for the Concision (or for those who would mutilate you)”.

All three of these terms refer to false teachers, but they use different methods to destroy the fellowship.

- Dogs are those who Devour the Fellowship.
- Evil workers are those who Divide the Fellowship.
- The Concision are those who Disrupt the Fellowship.

These false teachers Devour, Divide, and Disrupt the Fellowship. These men were Immoral, Influential, and Injurious. They were zealous, but wrong, active in the church but evil in their influence.

1. Dogs: Those Paul calls dogs were Judaizers who brought legalism into the Church. They went back to the old ways of the Jews in

keeping rites, ceremonies, and the Jewish Law. They said, "Yes, you must trust Christ, but you must also keep the Law of Moses and follow certain Jewish traditions." We find that today when folks add baptism, the Lord's Supper, or joining their church to faith in Christ.

2. Evil Workers: These believed in a works salvation. They believed their works were a part of their being accepted by God. An example might be the Jehovah's Witness or the Mormons.

3. The Concision: The word "concision" means "to cut" or "to mutilate" and was a play on words for those who taught the Gentiles had to be circumcised to be saved. The rite of circumcision was nothing more than mutilation of the flesh if they did not know Christ personally in their hearts.

Why do so many believe in a works salvation? Because of pride! Most folks believe that human achievement results in earthly rewards and honors, and that those works will somehow result in

heavenly rewards. They believe that by working hard for the Lord and accomplishing more than most, they will earn God's favor and receive God's nod of approval.

What drives these folks on so relentlessly? Pride! They work and strive and push so they can prove they are worthy and deserving of heaven. They think they can attain righteousness on their own and don't need divine righteousness.

Pride also keeps us from asking for God's divine help. Folks love to leave the impression that they can handle life on their own without God's help.

Have you learned that salvation comes, not by what you have done for God, but by what God has done for you? Have you learned to put absolutely no confidence in anything you have done concerning your relationship to God?

Some Christians don't have assurance of their salvation because they keep looking at their conversion experience from their side of it. They keep asking questions such as:

- Did I really repent?
- Was my faith only emotionalism?
- Was I sorry enough about my sins?

Christians need to realize:

- What happened to them was by the grace of God.
- It was a gift of God and a work of God.
- The desire to be saved came from Him. Your hatred of sin comes from Him.
- We just need to learn to rejoice in His gift of faith and His gift of repentance that leads to our salvation.

III. What Paul Discarded Philippians 3:4-8

Paul said that if anyone had a reason to trust in his works for salvation, he did, But he counted everything he had done in the flesh as dung.

Paul had much he could have bragged about, but he knew all he did in the flesh was as filthy rags: vain and worthless. He had:

1. Pride in Ritual – "circumcised the eighth day"

Paul could trace his lineage all the way back to Abraham, which made him an heir of the Covenant of God. A lot of people today think ritual will get them into heaven: They were christened as a baby or baptized as an adult.

2. Pride in Relationship – "I was of the people of Israel"

Paul was no proselyte. He was a natural born Jew; a full-blooded Jew. But it was not the blood of his ancestors that saved him and cleansed him from sin. It was the blood of Jesus Christ. Your grandfather might have been a Baptist preacher, but if you are trusting in your relative's faith to save you, you'll be disappointed on judgment day.

3. Pride in Respectability – "of the tribe of Benjamin"

Benjamin was the son of Jacob and Rachel and the only one of twelve sons who was born in the Promised Land. But that was not enough to gain him access to heaven.

4. Pride in Race – “a Hebrew of Hebrews”

Paul was no half-breed like a Samaritan. His was a pure lineage.

5. Pride of Religion – “as touching the Law, a Pharisee”

A Pharisee belonged to the National Honor Society of Judaism. They were the cream of the crop, the MVPs of the Jewish race. A Pharisee memorized the Pentateuch, the first five books of the Hebrew Old Testament. They tithed twenty percent of their income. They were religious, but hell will be full of religious people.

6. Pride of Reputation – “as for zeal, persecuting the Church”

Paul was a stickler for purity and made sure everyone toed the line. He served with zeal and thought he was in God's will when he persecuted the Church.

7. Pride of Righteous – “as for legalistic righteousness, faultless”

When it came to the Law, he was blameless. There was no demand of the Law he didn't fulfill. No one could point an accusing finger at him for not keeping the outward rules.

Paul thought he was going to flash all his credentials at the gates of heaven, but that day on the Road to Damascus, he met Jesus Christ face-to-face, and there he understood all his credentials meant nothing. It's not in the Law or works or religion; it's in Jesus Christ.

Instead of getting him into heaven, Paul's list of qualifications were keeping him out of heaven. The one thing he needed to get into heaven, he didn't have. He needed Jesus in his heart and his life. Salvation is Jesus plus nothing!

Notice Verse 7. Paul was willing to forsake all to follow Christ.

IV. What Paul Declared Philippians 3:8-9

Listen: There's nobody like Jesus. Jesus is all you need. Jesus can save you; Jesus alone!

I'd rather have Jesus than men's applause,

I'd rather be faithful to His dear cause.

I'd rather have Jesus than world-wide fame,

I'd rather be true to His dear Name!

Philippians 3:7-11 **KNOWING JESUS BETTER**

The theme of Paul's life was Jesus! In Philippians 1:21 Paul said, “For me, living is Jesus.” The greatest thing that had ever happened to Paul was getting to know Christ on the Damascus Road, and the greatest thing that could happen to him from that point on was getting to know Jesus better.

I think he would have joined in singing with all his heart:

“More about Jesus would I know, more of His grace to others show

More of His saving fullness see, more of His love who died for me.”

Paul was a very highly motivated man, both before and after his conversion. He wanted his life to count for Christ and he wanted to be the best he could be. He put his all into everything he did.

When Paul came to know Jesus in the forgiveness of his sins, he wanted other people to know Him too. But more than that, he wanted them to be identified with Christ. Paul's desire for his brothers in Christ is found in Galatians 4:19: That Christ be formed in them, also.

Almost 30 years had passed since Paul met Christ on the Damascus Road and his desire to know Christ better is stronger than ever (See Philippians 3:10).

Paul started his Christian life fired up for Jesus – totally committed to Him and serving Jesus with all he had. Now, thirty years later, he had lost none of his zeal, his commitment, or his passion for Christ.

- Philippians 3:10 – “That I may know Him.”
- Philippians 3:9 – “And be found in Him.”
- Philippians 3:8 – “That I may win Christ.”

What was it that Paul wanted to know about Christ? How do you get to know Christ better?

I. Paul Wanted to Know the Person of Christ Philippians 3:10

Paul had a choice of three Greek words that he could have used for the word “know.”

1. To comprehend mentally

We can know a person historically. For example, I know Abraham Lincoln and George Washington because I have read about them.

2. To know by acquaintance, by familiarity, or contact

I know Dr. Barkley and the teller at the bank and the man that fixes my car.

3. To know by experienced

This word indicates a personal, intimate knowledge of another person. I know my wife and my son. That's the word Paul uses here.

Paul had met the Lord thirty years ago, but he wanted that relationship to grow to be a wonderful fellowship. There is all the difference in the world between meeting someone and growing in relationship with them for 30 years.

Paul does not just want to know ABOUT Jesus; he wants to know Jesus. Jesus loves us and died for us and He wants to have fellowship with someone and they want to have fellowship with us, there is the great possibility of a strong, life-changing fellowship with that person.

The obsession of Paul's life was to know Jesus more and more and better and better. Our Personal relationship with Jesus should lead to a Progressive relationship with Him. Relationships should grow and develop.

Far too many Christians know Christ in a nominal way. They received Him as Savior, but have not taken the steps needed to grow in the Lord. Salvation is wonderful, but that is only the beginning point of a walk with God. Unfortunately, that's as far as some Christians get.

Paul says in Philippians 3:8 that he desires to know with excellency of knowledge.

How do you get to know Jesus better and better?

Relationships take time and interaction with one another. And there is no substitute or shortcuts to this. I thought I loved my wife when I married her. We had gotten to know one another. We loved doing things together. We enjoyed each other's company. But now – these years later – our love is much richer and deeper. We almost know what each other is thinking. SCARY!

Spend time with Jesus. The more you get to know Him, the more you will love Him. Spend time in His Word letting Him speak to you. Spend time with Him in prayer, speaking to Him. Worship Him. Praise Him. Fellowship with Him with your brothers and sisters in Christ.

II. Paul Wanted to Know the Power of Christ Philippians 3:10

The power Paul is talking about is more power than was demonstrated by the multiplying of the bread and fish, more power than the stilling of the storm and even more power than the creation of the universe.

Paul speaks of God's power that lifted Jesus from death after His awful crucifixion.

- It is God's power that placed Jesus on His throne again as the living, reigning Lord.
- That power is the legacy of every child of God.

The experience of the christian commences with the sinner tasting first of Christ's resurrection power in salvation.

- Remember that conversion is described as passing out of death into life.
- John 5:24
- Ephesians 2:1

To live in the power of Christ's resurrection is to become more and more “dead” to the ways of this world and the lust of the flesh and it involves becoming more like Christ.

- Romans 6:11
- As Christians, we have known the power of Christ's resurrection in the PAST – at the moment of conversion – Ephesians 2:4-6.
- We can know the power of Christ resurrection in the PRESENT because the power of His resurrection was accomplished that we might walk in newness of life – Romans 7:19, 21-24; 6:4-13.
- We will know that power completely in the FUTURE when our bodies will be raised up as His was – I Corinthians 15:51-58.

III. Paul Wanted to Know the Passion of Christ Philippians 3:10

These sufferings do not refer to the pain of the cross.

Notice the word “fellowship” – “the fellowship of His sufferings.”

- The word “fellowship” involves partnership and participation in fellowship.
- As Paul was a partner with Christ in the work of the Lord, he knew he would suffer in the things Christ went through.

Why would Paul WANT to participate in the same kind of sufferings that Christ experienced?

- Because suffering has a way of driving us closer to the Lord.
- Suffering for the “faith” is not a penalty; it is a privilege, for thereby we share the very work of Christ.

Peter writes to those who are already suffering for Christ: I Peter 2:21

- He said that some would suffer for doing good I Peter 2:20
- Some suffer for righteousness sake I Peter 3:14
- Some will suffer for the Name of Christ I Peter 4:13-14
- Some will suffer as a Christian I Peter 4:16
- Some will suffer according to the will of God I Peter 4:19

Is it your desire – your passion – to know Jesus more and more?

Jim Elliott, the missionary martyred by the Auca Indians said, “He is no fool who gives up what he cannot keep, to gain what he cannot lose.”

Philippians 3:12-14 FACING FORWARD

This passage in Philippians 3:12-14 is all about growth – spiritual growth. Paul was SAVED and SANTIFIED, but he was not SATISFIED with where he was spiritually.

No matter how much we grow in the knowledge and holiness of our Lord, there is always room for further growth and development in our Lord. Wherever we are in our spiritual growth, it is not a stopping place. There is still room for more growth. At no point does God say we have grown enough. Instead, He tells us to go on with the Lord.

Where are you in your spiritual growth in the Lord? If you get to a place where you think you have arrived spiritually, you will cease to grow in the Lord. When you are willing to admit there are areas where you need to grow, that is a sign of a maturing Christian.

Let's join Paul on his quest for spiritual maturity.

Paul pictures the Christian life as a race. In fact, the Christian life is often pictured as a race in the Bible (Hebrews 12:1; I Corinthians 9:24). But the Christian life is not a sprint nor a hundred yard dash, the Christian life is a long-distance, cross-country race with many obstacles before us. We never know when the obstacles will show up, but we must be ready at all times and deal with them as soon as possible when they do show up lest they hinder us in the race.

Three things I want to share with you from this passage:

I. Paul's Examination Philippians 3:12a, 13a

If anyone could be set up as a model saint and could have rested on his laurels, it was Paul.

- He had seen the risen Lord.
- He had visited the third heaven.
- He was one of the world's greatest preachers.
- He was hand picked by God to be the Apostle to the Gentiles.
- God used him to write a large section of the New Testament.
- He was a great soul-winner.

And, yet, he says that he has not arrived. He was not satisfied with where he was spiritually. He was satisfied with Jesus. He was just not satisfied with himself.

Let me share an important point here. All Christians are in a spiritual race, but we are not running against other believers. We are running against ourselves.

Sometimes Christians compare themselves to other believers and think, "Well, I'm sure ahead of them in the Christian race. I may not be all God wants me to be, but I'm ahead of him or her. I'm more faithful than they are. I have more talents than they do. I attend more services than they do. I've given more money than they have."

God set the standard – not so that we could reach someone else's standard, but He knows our potential, our abilities, our spiritual capacities and we are running against ourselves and the abilities God has given us. So stop looking at how others are running and how others are doing in the race. We are running for the Lord, to please Him. We should focus our attention on Him.

II. Paul's Exertion Philippians 3:13-14

Paul had been running the race for about 25 years, but he knew he had not arrived. Growth takes time. You can grow a mushroom overnight, but it won't last long. A radish takes about 14 days to grow. But to grow a Redwood in California takes a thousand years; but it is strong and lasting.

Paul tells us how he runs the race with five action statements:

- Verse 12 – "I follow after."
- Verse 13 – "This one thing I do."
- Verse 13 – "Forgetting those things that are behind"
- Verse 13 – "Reaching forth"
- Verse 14 – "I press toward the mark"

A. "I Follow After" Philippians 3:12

The word "follow" means "to run swiftly in order to catch a person or thing. It pictures a hunter pursuing his prey or a runner chasing the finish line.

Salvation is merely the start of our race for Christ. Too many are "stuck on salvation." They got saved, but that's as far as they've

gone with the Lord. We were converted to be conformed unto Christ.

Notice the words “apprehend” and “apprehended.” The word means “to lay hold on.” Paul says, “My goal is to lay hold on all that Jesus laid hold on for me. I have not become all Jesus wants me to become, but I'm following after; I'm pursuing it; I'm pressing for it, and I won't be satisfied until I reach all He wants me to reach.”

B. “This one thing I do” Philippians 3:13

This is the secret of Paul's success. Paul was a specialist with a singleness of purpose. Someone said, “If you feel like you are going around in circles, maybe you are cutting too many corners.”

C. “Forgetting those things that are behind” Philippians 3:13

Like everyone else, Paul had things in his past that were best forgotten, as well as some things that he was proud to remember. Like Paul we need to forget some past guilt, and past grief, and past glories, and past grudges.

Understand that the word “forget” doesn't mean to erase from one's memory, but “to refuse to be affected by the past in such a way that it will stop our progress in the future.”

What are some of the things we need to forget?

1. Our past sins – Psalm 103:12; Micah 7:19; Hebrews 10:17

Let me remind you again that to forget doesn't mean to eliminate from our memory. I have heard people say, “When God forgives us of our sins, He forgets our sins.” God doesn't forget our sins. God is omniscient: It is impossible for God to forget anything. God never says, “I forget their sins.” God says, “I remember them no more.” Now there's a big difference in remembering them no more and forgetting them. If God ever forgot something, He would cease being omniscient. But what God says is, “I will never bring those sins up against you again.” The devil may pull old skeletons out of the past, but God never does.

2. Our Past Sorrows

Past sorrows must not knock us out of the race.

3. Our Past Sights

Those hurts of the past. We must not allow anger, bitterness, or resentment to stop us in the race.

4. Our Past Successes

We can't rest on what we did back then.

D. “Reaching Forth” Philippians 3:13

As one nears the finish line, he leans forward and strains for the goal.

E. “I Press Toward the Mark” Philippians 3:14

The reason many Christians fail is because they quit before the race is finished.

III. Paul's Expectation Philippians 3:14

Look at the word “prize.” You don't get the prize for starting the race, but only for finishing the race.

To win the prize you must:

1. Get in the race. Salvation is the starting point.

2. Run the race – all the way.

3. Notice that Paul was not content just to run the race, he wanted to win the race.

4. Not only did he want to win the race, he wanted to be a way-out-front winner.

Notice that Paul saw the prize as a high-calling of God in Christ Jesus.

Well, how did Paul do in his race? 2 Timothy 4:6-8.

How well are you running the Christian race? Are your eyes on Jesus alone?

Turn your eyes upon Jesus, look full in His wonderful face,

And the things of earth will grow strangely dim,

In the Light of His glory and grace.

In Switzerland at the foot of the Alps in a little country cemetery is the burial place of a young Englishman. On his tomb rock is his name, his birth date and the date of his death, and these words:

“He died climbing.”

My heart has no desire to stay

Where doubts arise and fears dismay.

Tho some may dwell where these abound

My prayer, my aim is higher ground.

I want to scale the utmost height

And catch a gleam of glory bright

But still I'll pray till heaven I've found

Lord, lead me on to higher ground.

Philippians 3:17-19

A CONTRAST BETWEEN SAINT AND SINNER

The Book of Philippians is a book of joy. It constantly bubbles up with joy. But in these verses we see Paul weeping. Crying. Sobbing. Paul tells us about those of whom he is weeping in Philippians 3:18-19. They are “the enemies of the cross, whose end is destruction, whose God is their belly, whose glory is in their shame, and who mind earthly things.”

There is a difference in people who are lost and people who are saved. We may not always look differently or talk differently, but there is a real difference. God never tries to play down the differences; in fact, He always magnifies the difference.

- Lost people are dead spiritually; saved people are alive spiritually.
- Lost people have no hope after death; saved people walk in assurance and live in confidence that after this life, heaven awaits them.

Those who are lost are identified as enemies of the cross. That doesn't mean they carry signs saying, “Down with the cross” or burn churches or destroy Bibles. In fact, some who are enemies of the cross actually wear crosses around their necks; never realizing that they themselves are enemies of the cross. Paul said that he would “glory” ONLY in the cross.

Paul speaks about two things in these verses: (1) An Example of a Christian, and (2) An Enemy of the Cross.

I. An Example of a Christian Philippians 3:17

Notice the words “followers together...” “mark them...” “an example.”

Paul is talking about “role models” for Christians – someone to look up to, to admire and respect, those who set examples for us to follow, those who portray values and virtues that we should imitate, those who inspire us to be the best we can be.

There are plenty of folks that would lead us downward. Role models are needed to motivate us and lift us up.

The word “followers” is from the Greek word that we get our English word “mimic” from. Paul says, “mimic me or imitate me.” Paul was not being egotistical or cocky, but he was confident. He knew the Lord and that he loved the Lord and served the Lord and obeyed the Lord and honored the Lord in his life.

A little boy was sitting with his mother in church, listening to a sermon entitled, “What is a Christian?” The preacher punctuated his sermon at several key intervals by asking, “What is a Christian?” Each time he pounded his fist on the pulpit for emphasis. At one

point the little boy whispered to his mother, "Mamma, do you know? Do you know what a Christian is?" "Yes, dear," said his mother, "now be quiet and listen."

As the preacher wrapped up his sermon, once again he thundered, "What is a Christian?" This time he pounded especially hard on the pulpit; and when he did, the little boy jumped up and shouted, "Tell him, Mamma, tell him!"

Paul understood that everyone is an example. It's not a question of whether or not you are going to be an example, the issue is are you going to be a good example or a bad one.

Paul said, "Follow me!" That's an astounding thing to say. "If you want to learn how to pray, follow me." "If you want to become a faithful evangelist, follow me." "If you want to see compassion in action, follow me." Who among us would dare to utter such statements? Yet, six times in the New Testament Paul says, "Follow me."

Was he an egotistical braggart? Did he think he was a perfect Christian? Not at all. In verse 12 he clearly says that he has not yet arrived at spiritual completion. Well, then, how could Paul say, "Follow me" ? What he meant was, "Follow me as I follow Christ."

Think of the Christ life as a long parade from earth to heaven. At the head of the line is Jesus Christ, the Captain of our salvation. Step by step He is leading His followers to glory. It's a long road with many twist and turns, but He is fully committed to seeing that every believer makes it in the end. Since the parade is long and filled with millions of people, we need folks in front of us who can keep us on track. We need mentors, models, heroes if you will, people who are farther along in the spiritual journey who can keep us pointed toward the Lord. Without such input, we're likely to veer off the trail and end up in the wilderness.

Let me ask two questions:

(1) Who are you following? Who is up ahead of you showing the way, pointing out the rough places in the road, and making sure you don't make a wrong turn? We all need people like that in our lives. None of us ever reach a point where we can say, "I can do this on my own." We all need the encouragement of being around people who pray better than we do, who witness better than we do and who have a deeper knowledge of God's Word than we do.

(2) Who is following you? Think again about the image of a great parade. Jesus stands at the front, followed by a vast throng – you strain to catch a better glimpse of the Lord, but it's hard to see Him through all the people. So simply begin to follow the crowd in front of you.

As long as they are following Jesus, you are following Him through their good example. Now look behind you. Do you see all the faces looking in your direction? They are following you and you didn't realize it. As long as you follow those who follow Christ, you will be following Him too – and so will those who follow you.

Paul said, "Mark them" that are good role models. The word means "to fix your attention upon them with desire and interest, take special note of them, pay close and careful attention to those who live a faithful Christian life – and follow their example.

What is the Gospel According to You?

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

I'd rather one would talk with me than merely tell the way.

The eye's a better pupil and more willing than the ear;

Fine counsel is confusing; but example's always clear.

The best of all preachers are the men who live their creeds;

For to see good put in action is what everybody needs.

I soon can learn to do it, if you'll let me see it done;

I can watch your hands in action, but your tongue too fast may run.

The lectures you deliver may be wise and may be true,

But I'd rather get my lessons by observing what you do.

I may not understand the high advice you give,

But there's no misunderstanding how you act and how you live.

II. An Enemy of the Cross Philippians 3:18-19

Who were those enemies of the cross? They were not the drunkards or the harlots that caused Paul to weep, but men who claimed they were Christians. One of the greatest hindrances to Christianity is those who speak the language of the Church and profess to be part of the life of the Church and at the same time are false brethren – lost and on their way to a Christ-less eternity.

Galatians 1:7 says “the enemy of the cross perverts the gospel and troubles you.” These people stand in opposition to everything Christ and His Church stands for. They have declared war on the cause of Christ. They are wolves in sheep's clothing.

Paul talks about:

A. Their Future Philippians 3:19 “Whose end is destruction”

The word “destruction” is sometimes translated “perdition.” Jesus used this word when He referred to Judas as “the son of perdition” (John 17:12).

– In Matthew 7:13 Jesus said, “Wide is the gate, and broad is the way, that leads to

destruction (perdition), and many there be which go in thereat.”

– Jesus spoke of the broad way that leads to destruction and the words of Jesus cannot be

softened to lessened the impact of His words in Matthew 25:41, “Depart from Me, ye

cursed, into everlasting fire, prepared for the devil and his angels.” Does that mean hell?

Yes! And the greatest tragedy is not hell's pain or its temperature, but its length.

Destruction doesn't mean annihilation. It would be better for those in hell if they could die and get it over with, but, NO! It will be eternal suffering! Eternal separation! Ever dying, but ever living and never dying!

B. Their Futility Philippians 3:19

1. “Whose god is their belly”

Is Paul talking about a man's literal belly? If so, I know some with a big god!

The word “belly” here means unrestrained, fleshly, sensual appetites. These are not in control of their appetites; their appetites are in control of them.

The “belly” carries the idea of anything for which we have an appetite. It can be food, clothing, sex, power, money. A god is something one lives for or something one serves or something one worships.

2. “Whose glory is in their shame”

These enemies of the cross have no shame in how they are living, in fact, they parade their wickedness. They pride themselves in that which brought shame. They didn't feel guilt about their immorality. They gloried in it! Sounds like the homosexuals of our day, does it not? They even throw their wickedness in the face of those who are committed to the cross of Christ and demand their “rights” and find ways to legalize their wicked unions!

C. Their Focus Philippians 3:19: “They set their minds on earthly things.”

Earthly things are priority to them!

Where will their lifestyle lead them? Listen again to Philippians 3:19a.

God will judge every enemy of the cross!

Philippians 3:20-21

LOOKING AND LONGING FOR OUR LORD'S RETURN

In this Book of Joy – the Book of Philippians – there are really only two occasions for sorrow or sadness from Paul.

- One involves two ladies in the Church who are fussing at each other. We'll see that next time in Philippians 4.
- The other occasion we looked at last week in Philippians 3:17-18. Paul said there were some who were "enemies of the cross of Christ." What an awful description! And then he adds, "who mind earthly things."

But now, in these verses that we are about to look at, Paul says it is much different for those who glory in the cross of Christ. They don't mind earthly things; that is, they don't live a materialist, earth-bound life, but their mind is on heavenly things.

Colossians 3:2 encourages us to "set our affection on things above, not on things on the earth.

We are not to be earthly-minded, but Heavenly-minded! Christians ought to live on earth with Heaven on our mind.

In fact, if you never have Heaven on your mind, if it has no place in your thinking, in your decision making, in how you spend your money, in how you spend your time, how you invest your energy, you might ask yourself if you are really a citizen of Heaven.

Paul's point in these two verses is not just about the future; I think his main point is about the present.

Our heavenly citizenship doesn't begin at death or at the rapture of the church, but at conversion. That means that while we are living down here on earth, we should be living as if we are living in Heaven.

The old song says: "I've got Heaven ... Heaven on my mind, And now I'm feeling mighty fine."

Four things Paul brings to our attention in these two verses:

I. The Revelation Philippians 3:20a

"Our conversation is in Heaven." This is the only time this word is used in the New Testament. The word does not refer to what we say, but to who we are.

If you have something other than the King James Version, you may have the word "citizenship."

The word means "a colony of foreigners..." those who belong to another country ... it was used to describe a capital city that kept the names of its citizens on a register. We are citizens of Heaven and our name is on Heaven's register. We are just waiting for the day when we occupy our eternal home. All that remains is our moving there.

We are here on this earth as Heaven's ambassadors. We have a responsibility in this present world never to disgrace our homeland. Our conduct should match our citizenship.

Notice that Paul said that "our citizenship IS (right now) in Heaven."

How do you get to be a citizen of a country? When you are born there you are a citizen there. We are Heaven-born and, therefore, Heaven-bound.

This world is not my home, I'm just a passing through

My treasures are laid up, Somewhere beyond the blue.

The angels beckon me, from Heaven's open door,

And I can't feel at home in this world anymore.

II. The Expectation Philippians 3:20b

"From which we eagerly wait for the Savior, the Lord Jesus Christ." The words "look for" means "to eagerly wait for."

Nothing was more central in the thinking of the New Testament writers than the Second Coming of our Lord to this earth again.

Twenty-three of the 27 New Testament books mention the Second Coming of our Lord. Only Galatians and three books with only one chapter do not mention our Lord's Second Coming, 2 and 3 John and Philemon.

- Jesus liked to talk about His Second Coming – Mark 8:38; 13:26-27; John 14:1-3.
- Paul talked about it – I Thessalonians 4:16-18.
- Peter talked about it – 2 Peter 3:3-4, 8-14.
- James talked about it – James 5:8.

- The writer of Hebrews talked about it – Hebrews 10:37.
- John talked about it – Revelation 1:7.

Never before have there been so many signs of His coming been fulfilled:

- The rebirth of the State of Israel.
- The rise of Russia.
- The coming together of the nations of Europe.
- The discovery of nuclear power.
- A permissive society.
- The widespread use of illegal drugs.

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- Pornography and perversion – homosexuality.
- Apostasy in the Church.
- Famines, floods, earthquakes, terrorism, persecution.

Do you really believe that Jesus could come back at any moment to catch us away to meet Him in the air? If you do, it will be reflected in the way you live and work for Him.

Living in the light of the Second Coming means not only watching expectantly, but it also means living holy lives.

Titus 2:11-13.

III. The Anticipation Philippians 3:21a

“Our vile body” means “our body of humiliation...” our “lowly, limited body.” Our present earthly bodies are not in condition for our future state.

- These bodies are subject to disease and sickness and deterioration and death. That's why we have to have pace-makers for our hearts, eye-glasses to help us see, hearing aids to help us hear, false teeth to help us eat.

I Corinthians 15:51-53

- No matter how much you love the Lord and are devoted to Him and no matter how much you try to avoid sin, you are going to sin as long as you are in this body. Why? Because we all still have our old sin nature.

I John 3:2: “We know that when He appears, we shall be like Him.” The old sin nature will be gone! Glory!!

Our body will be redeemed and we will be free from the presence of sin!

IV. The Transformation Philippians 3:21

Change equals Transform.

Fashion: To cause something to become conformed through a creative act able to subdue all things unto Himself: with His great power, He will bring everything under His authority.

What will we be like in heaven?

Our old bodies will be totally transformed into the likeness of our Lord's glorified body ... without sin, not subject to time or space, recognizable, able to speak, see, know things – much like our earthly body looks, but perfectly glorious like our Lord's.

There is coming a day

When no heartaches shall come,

No more clouds in the sky,
No more tears to dim the eyes;
All is peace forevermore
on that happy golden shore ...
What a day, glorious day, that will be!
Even so, Lord Jesus, come quickly!!

Philippians 4:1-3

STINKY AND TOUCHY

I want you to imagine yourself attending a large, beautiful wedding ceremony. The wedding has been planned for months; now the day has finally arrived. The church is decorated beautifully and the anticipation is high.

Before the attendants make their way to the front of the church to stand in their places, a beautiful young lady makes her way on stage and sits down at her harp and she plays music that sounds like it is coming from heaven.

The pipe organist accompanies the harpist as a spotlight shines on the altar where the bride and groom will meet. As the music plays, the bride and groom's attendants make their way to the front and find their respective places.

The groom makes his way in front of the altar. He stands there in his tuxedo, awaiting the presence of his beautiful bride. The magical moment finally arrives as the organist begins to play the wedding march. Everyone rises and looks up the aisle for the first glimpse of the bride.

Then for the first time, the bride appears. Suddenly there is a horrified gasp! The wedding party and those in attendance can't believe their eyes. The groom stares in embarrassed disbelief! Instead of a beautiful bride dressed in elegant white, the bride is limping down the aisle. Her dress is soiled and torn. Ugly cuts and bruises cover her bare arms. Her nose is bleeding, one eye is purple and swollen and her hair is disheveled. She has obviously been in a fight or some kind of conflict.

Doesn't the groom deserve better than this? But wait! As you look closer you recognize the Groom as the Lord Jesus – the Heavenly Bridegroom! His Bride, the Church, has been fighting again!

That's not the way the Lord wants to meet His Bride. Listen to Ephesians 5:25-27:

“Christ loved the Church and gave Himself for her that He might set her apart and cleanse her with the washing of water by the Word, that He might present her to Himself a glorious Church, not having spot or wrinkle or any such thing, but that she should be holy and without blemish.”

Try to picture our Lord standing next to His brawling Bride! If Christ were to take His wedding picture or our Church today, what would the picture look like?

Jesus did tell us to watch for wolves who would destroy the lambs, but here He is talking about sheep who turn on other sheep and on their under-shepherds.

It is unthinkable and unnatural, but His Bride has been brawling for centuries. In these verses we are introduced to two Fussing Females who are at odds with each other – and it was affecting the fellowship of the church.

Paul even names them:

- Euodia means “prosperous journey” or “pleasant fragrance.”
- Syntyche means “pleasant acquaintance” or “happy chance; good luck.”

Since these two ladies were not living up to their names, someone nicknamed them, “You Odorous” and “Soon Touchy.” I just shortened their names down to “Stinky” and “Touchy.”

I. Their Positions Philippians 4:3

It is evident that both of these ladies were prominent members of the church. They had even labored with Paul in the gospel. These ladies had at one time been good, strong, helpful servants of Christ.

It is always hurtful and harmful when Any member of the church is at odds with someone in the church, but the more Honor you have brought to the Lord Jesus, the more Dishonor you can bring to the Lord when you get out of fellowship with the Lord and with His people.

To put it another way, the more you have Done for the Lord and His Church, the more you can Undo, if you get out of fellowship with the Lord and the Lord's people. That's why Paul took this matter so seriously. These were good people in a good church and they could do much harm by acting in a loveless and selfish way.

Let me say it one more way, bad actions by good Christians do more harm than bad actions by sorry Christians.

Notice how Paul addresses these members at Philippi, including these two ladies. He bares the love of his soul for them because they are part of the church. They are members of the same body. He addresses them as:

- My brethren
- Dearly beloved (twice)
- Longed-for brethren
- My joy and crown (his future crown in glory)

The pastor's only success is seen in the people he helps. Paul had invested his life in these people and, the tragedy of tragedies, is to come up empty and to see them act no better than lost people.

In Philippians 4:3 Paul says these ladies labored with him in the gospel and their names are in the Book of Life. Those whose names are registered in the Book of Life identifies those who will inherit eternal life. What security it is, to know that your name is written in the Book of Life.

In Luke 10 Jesus sent seventy of His disciples into different towns and gave them power to work miracles. When the seventy returned to the Lord they were filled with joy and reported, "Lord, even the demons are subject to us in Your Name." (Luke 10:17) Jesus answered, "Do not rejoice that the spirits are subject to you, but rather rejoice because your names are written in heaven."

II. Their Pettiness Philippians 4:2-3

What caused the rift between these two prominent ladies? Well, we do not know the specifics, but listen to James 4:1:

"From whence come wars and fightings among you? Come they not hence, even of your own lusts that war in your members?"

Where do arguing, bickering, quarreling, grumbling, and criticizing come from? They come when someone doesn't agree with you or when you don't get your way. That's where conflicts come from.

One of Satan's most powerful tools is a wedge that he drives between two believers. Satan doesn't need lost people to ruin a church. He uses some of the best members of the church as wedges or demolition wrecking balls.

Church members rarely fight over what is worthwhile or helpful to the cause of Christ, but over tacky, petty junk that reflects their selfishness and stubbornness.

The tragedy is that too often personal problems have a way of becoming public problems when family and friends begin to get involved and start taking sides. Some began to side with Euodia while others began to side with Syntyche.

It must have been a very serious matter for Paul to name the two ladies and their hostility to one another to be written about in this letter. Did you notice that Paul didn't say, "Let's find out who is right and who is wrong?" Why? Even if you're technically right in any given argument, you're spiritually wrong because the Lord wants you to be forgiving and gracious and merciful.

Paul even asked someone to step in and help with their reconciliation. Notice Philippians 4:3. The word "yoke-fellow" means one who is especially gifted by God to step in and to bring reconciliation and peace to those in conflict.

When a church received a letter from Paul, someone would read the letter aloud to the whole church. Paul had already hinted at the problem between these two and I wonder as the elder read the letter if their hearts didn't sting just a bit.

Philippians 1:27:

"Only let your conduct be worthy of the gospel of Christ, so that whether I come and see you or am absent, I may hear of your affairs, that you stand fast in one spirit, with one mind striving together for the faith of the gospel."

Then when the elder read Philippians 2:1-4, I think both ladies looked at the floor. I don't think they looked at each other. (Read the passage.)

Then Paul drops the bomb. He calls the two warring ladies by name! Talk about embarrassment!

The Prospect

"I beseech ... I beg ... I urge ... please, please."

Paul loved both of these ladies, but if these ladies had the right spirit, they would both have made an effort to right the wrong between them. Euodia was not to wait for Syntyche to take the first step and Syntyche was not to wait for Euodia to take the first step.

Some say, "Well, if she comes and offers an apology, I'll accept it." No, each must commit herself to making the first move.

I heard about two porcupines up in Northern Canada. It was so cold one night that they tried to huddle close together to stay warm. But the closer they got the more their quills pricked each other. They needed each other, but they needled each other. Their fine points kept them apart. I've met folks like that!

Sadly, I've met some folks who enjoy keeping something stirred up. We as believers are to be peacemaker.

Are you aware of an offended spirit toward anyone? An unforgiving spirit? Are you willing to come to terms with it – now?

Start by telling God how much it hurts and that you need Him to help you forgive the offense. Get rid of all the poison of build-up anger and pour out all the anger of long-term resentment.

Fully forgive the offender. Let it go! You'll discover you're a new man or a new woman! You'll receive such a new spirit of joy that you won't feel like the same person.

Philippians 4:4-7

A LIFE WORTH LIVING

Many folks are asking the question today, "Is life worth living?", and more and more people in the United States are beginning to answer that question with a resounding, "No."

Are you aware that last year there were more suicides in America than there were murders? Psychiatrist tell us that there are at least 12 million people in America who are in such deep depression they have lost all desire to live.

Ernest Hemingway, the well-known author, committed suicide and left this note, "Life is just a dirty trick. A trip from nothingness to nothingness."

H. G. Wells said, "Life is a bad joke."

A crust of bread and a corner to sleep in,

A minute to smile and an hour to weep in,

A pint of joy and a peck of trouble,

And never a laugh but the moon comes double,

And this is life!

Many people are like that shipwrecked sailor I read about who spent three years on a deserted island. One day he was overjoyed to see a ship drop anchor in the bay. A small boat came ashore and an officer handed this shipwrecked sailor some newspapers. Then the officer said, "The Captain suggested that you read what is going on in the world, and then you can let us know if you want to be rescued."

Yet, Jesus said, "I am come that you might have life and have it more abundantly" (John 10:10). The life Jesus gives is worth living

and it is the only life worth living. A life lived IN the Lord and THROUGH the Lord Jesus and FOR the Lord Jesus and BY the Lord Jesus!

How can you and I live this kind of life?

I. The Requirements of this Life Philippians 4:44-6

A. Praise Philippians 4:4

Do you remember what the first three verses of Chapter four is about? Two sisters in Christ in the church at Philippi had been in a tiff and it was affecting the fellowship.

Paul urged them to be of the same mind in the Lord. Then he said to them, "Rejoice in the Lord always. And again I will say it, Rejoice!"

Rejoicing in the Lord is a cure for disagreements. People who are happy in the Lord are not apt to give offense or to take offense. Their minds are so severely occupied with higher things that they are not easily distracted by the little things that arise among them. Joy in the Lord is the cure of all discord. Christian joy brings harmony to our soul.

"Rejoice in the Lord always;" now look at the next verse, and "be anxious for nothing" implying that joy in the Lord is one of the best preparations for the trials of this life. The cure for care is joy in the Lord!

When you and I are overflowing with joy and delight in Him, we will not say to ourself, "Why are you cast down, O my soul? Why are you disquieted in me? Hope you in God, for I shall yet praise Him for the help of His countenance."

Did you notice that this is a command from the Lord? "Rejoice in the Lord always." But it is a grace command. Joy and rejoicing is a very delightful thing. He commands us to be cheerful. Who wouldn't want to keep that command!

-The word "rejoice" is not only joy, but it is joy over again – Rejoice! You know "re" usually signifies the re-duplication of a thing, the taking of it over, again. We are to joy, and then we are to re-joy.

"Rejoice." Joy is a delightful thing and you cannot be too joyful! You can't have too much of it!

When you are joyful there is no need to sound a trumpet and say, "Look at me! I'm joyful!" When joy comes into a man, it shines out of his eyes and it sparkles in his countenance. His attitude and spirit are cheerful. It's a healthy thing in all respects.

And, the Grace of Joy is contagious! Some folks seem to be a lump of sunshine. They never seem to have a heavy heart and when you are around them, they seem to lift your spirits.

I have a friend who seems to always be filled with joy. What a privilege to be around him. He seems to constantly make a new discovery of some fresh mercy for which we can praise the Lord. He constantly wants to be a blessing to others.

Listen: Our God is a joyful God and He desires that we be a joyous people.

Isaiah 61:10: "I will greatly rejoice in the Lord, my soul shall be joyful in my God; for He has

clothed me with the garments of salvation, He has covered me with the robe of

righteousness."

Psalms 150:6: "Let everything that has breath praise the Lord. Praise ye the Lord."

I can't always rejoice in my circumstances, but I can always rejoice in the Lord.

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B. Patience Philippians 4:5

The word "moderation" means forbearance, patience, graciousness, fair-mindedness. You see, you and I are going to be wronged in this life, so how are we to react?

The word moderation speaks of the absence of certain things:

1. There should be the absence of Rudeness.

"Rudeness is the weak man's imitation of strength." There is never an excuse for a Christian to be rude. Moderation speaks of politeness, courtesy, and a well-mannered life.

2. There should be the absence of Rage.

Moderation is not exploding with anger, but the presence of gentleness and self-control.

3. There should be the absence of Revenge.

There is to be no “get-even-with” spirit. Moderation is found in the person who is merciful and ready to forgive.

C. Prayer Philippians 4:6

Paul says we are to worry about nothing and pray about everything.

The word “worry” means “to choke down” (like a lawn mower in tall grass) or to smother.” That’s what worry does to us!

Paul says, “Turn your cares into Prayers!”

Notice: “but in everything by prayer and supplication, with thanksgiving, let your request be made known to God.” We tend to take the BIG stuff to God, but we think we can handle the little stuff. God said in EVERYTHING! With Thanksgiving – an ingredient that is often missing in our prayers!

Are you weary, are you heavy-hearted?

Tell it to Jesus, Tell it to Jesus.

Are you grieving over joys departed?

Tell it to Jesus alone.

Tell it to Jesus, Tell it to Jesus,

He is a Friend that’s well known.

You have no other such a Friend or Brother,

Tell it to Jesus alone.

II. The Results of this Life Philippians 4:7

A. The Peace of God

We have Peace WITH God when we trust Him to save us and forgive us of our sins. But the Peace OF God is a deeper kind of peace. It is God’s peace. (see John 14:27)

This peace is an inner calm or tranquility based on unwavering confidence that God is able and willing to do what is best for His children.

B. The Protection of God

The word “keep” means “to guard.” It is a military term that means to keep watch over. God’s peace guards believers from worry, fear, doubt, and distress. God’s peace protects both our hearts (emotions) and our minds (from deceit).

God’s peace stands like a guard over our hearts and minds and when trouble or temptation knocks at the door, the peace of God will say, “Halt, who goes there?” If trouble or temptation says, “It is I,” God’s love and care will come to the believer’s aid.

You’ve heard the poem:

“There was an old lady who lived in a shoe.

She had so many children, she didn’t know what to do.”

Someone has offered this version of the poem:

There was a sad Christian who lived in a stew

She had so many troubles, tho she knew what she should do.

She should cast them all on Jesus and find sweet relief,

But she choose to worry and suffer much grief.

There's a better way:

O what peace we often forfeit

O what needless pain we bear,

All because we do not carry

Everything to God in prayer.

Philippians 4:8-9

MIND YOUR MIND

Let me give you a brief explanation of the title of this message, because it is really a play on words. I have used the word “mind” twice, but they have different meanings.

The first use of the word “mind” means “to give attention to, to take heed to, to tend or take care of.”

The second use of the word “mind” normally refers to man's mental faculties, that part of man that thinks or stores knowledge, the seat of his intelligence.

But the Bible has a far broader meaning. The word “heart” and the word “mind” are often used interchangeable in the Bible. In the language of the Bible, the heart or the mind refers to the seat of our decision-making process; the seat of our thought life, the seat of our will and emotions. It is the real you and the real you can be used for good or evil.

The key to experiencing joy in our heart is to have the right thoughts in your mind. So how are we to think? Here's how: Think on things that are true, honest, just, pure, lovely, of good report, virtuous, and praiseworthy.

Even spiritual men and women become discouraged. That's because they have been thinking thoughts that are not true, honest, lovely, good, and pure.

Peace and joy comes through positive thinking. The idea is that of focusing our thoughts until they shape our behavior. The truth is, what we think is what we become. Our thoughts shape our behavior. If a man thinks of something often enough and long enough, he will come to the stage when he cannot stop thinking about it.

A person who centers his thoughts upon the world and the things of the world will live for the world and the things of the world: money, property, possessions, position, power, recognition, honor, social standing, and a host of other worldly pursuits.

A person who centers his thoughts upon the flesh and the lust of the flesh will live to satisfy the lust of the flesh.

Four things I want us to see from these two verses:

I. The Power if the Mind

The slogan of the United Negro College Fund is, “A mind is a terrible thing to waste.” It is, but we see it done every day. Most Americans spend almost no time thinking about the real vital issues of life. Rather, we spend our time watching television, listening to “music” that doesn't make sense, or the pleasures we want to indulge in.

Did you know there is no such thing as a blank mind? The mind is always working, always receiving, always recording and remembering. The problem is that we often fill our minds with junk and negative and evil.

Psychiatrists tell us that the average person has 200 negative thoughts a day. Depressed people have as many as 600 negative thoughts a day. How can we reduce that number of negative thoughts? After all, our lives are a product of what we think about!

Let me give you some simple, but great, truths:

1. Each of us has the power to determine what we will think about or not think about.
2. How we use the power to choose our thoughts will determine in a large measure how we will act and feel about ourselves.

– “A man is what he thinks all day long.”

– Proverbs 4:23; 23:7a – “You are not what you think you are, but what you think, you are.”

3. Negative thinking is always destructive, so focus on the positive.

4. It is far better to look for the good in others, rather than the negative, and focus only on the good.

II. The Plot for the Mind

Why is the thought life so important? Because the thought life controls our Attitudes, our Actions, and our Achievements.

Sow a Thought; you Reap a Deed.

Sow a Deed; you Reap a Habit.

Sow a Habit; you Reap a Character.

Sow a Character; you Reap a Destiny.

(And it all begins with a Thought.)

Tell me what you think about and I'll tell you what you are and what kind of life you live.

There is a battle for your mind. Satan has made your mind a primary target for his attacks. There are three things Satan wants to do with your mind:

A. He wants to Corrupt your mind. 2 Corinthians 11:3

The word “corrupt” means to be seduced from wholehearted, sincere, pure devotion to Christ. He wants to divide your heart. He tells you that you can serve Christ AND the world – both!

B. He wants to Conquer your mind. 2 Corinthians 10:4-5

Satan has the ability to put things Into your mind, as he did with Judas – John 13:2.

Satan has the ability to take things Out of your mind – Luke 8:11-12 – the parable of the sower.

C. Satan wants to Condemn our mind 2 Corinthians 4:3-4

III. The Positives of our Mind Philippians 4:8

The word “think” means “to consider, to weigh, to ponder, to meditate, and to do so all throughout our lives. That calls for discipline of the mind.

What we think is so important to God that He tells us what we are to think:

1. “Whatsoever things are True” – real, genuine, sincere.

Things that are true develop stability and security. When one thinks on things that are not true, it is not long before his life reflects falsehood and deception.

2. “Whatsoever things are Honest” – honorable, noble, things that claim respect.

Honorable people are the result of honorable thoughts.

3. “Whatsoever things are Just” – things that are just are right and righteous by both divine and human standards.

4. “Whatsoever things are Pure” – morally clean, undefiled, free from moral pollution, filth, dirt, and impurities.

We are to avoid like a plague the things that contaminate and defile the mind. Every thought of the believer is to be pure. If you have a dirty mind it is because of what you hear, look at, or read. Be careful what you watch and listen to.

5. “Whatsoever things are Lovely – pleasing, winsome, gracious, kind, acceptable,

agreeable, and produces harmony.

That which builds people up, not tear them down.

6. "Whatsoever things are of Good Report" – commendable, gracious, winsome, worthy things.

He will not listen to gossip, rumors, or off-colored jokes.

7. "If there be any virtue (excellence) and if there be any praise (in any thought), think on these things."

"If it has virtue, it will motivate us to do better; and if it has praise, it is worth commending to others" (W.W.W).

IV. The Protection of the Mind Philippians 4:9

Paul ends by saying, "You have heard me teach you the things concerning the mind; you have received them from me, you have learned them from me; you have seen them lived out in me; now, do them yourselves. Make them a part of your life. If you will, the peace of God will be with you."

During the Civil War, President Lincoln attended Wednesday evening services at a church close to the White House. Accompanied by Secret Service agents, Lincoln would sit in the Pastor's study during the message; then they would walk back together. One evening, after the service, an agent asked Lincoln, "What did you think of tonight's sermon?" Lincoln replied, "It was brilliantly conceived, biblical, relevant, and well presented." "So, it was a great sermon?" "No, it failed. It failed because Dr. Gurley did not ask us to do something great."

Lincoln was right. God wants us to put truth into action. That's why Paul said, "Do it. Put this into practice in your life." As we put God's truth into action in our lives, we will enjoy the peace that comes from the Prince of Peace in our hearts.

Philippians 4:10-23 MORE!!

If there is one word – a single word – that summarizes American desires and hunger and craving, it would be the word "More"!!

More Money. More success. More luxuries and gizmos.

We live for more – for our next raise, our next house, our next car.

The things we already have, however wonderful they may be, tend to pale in comparison with the things we might still get.

And when we get more, the next thing we get is discontentment.

We want more! We want something else.

Chuck Swindoll cites a poem that expresses the discontentment that so fills our society.

It was spring

But it was summer I wanted,

The warm days,

And the great outdoors.

It was summer,

But it was fall I wanted,

The colorful leaves,

And the cool, dry air.

It was fall,

But it was winter I wanted,
The beautiful snow,
And the joy of the holiday season.

It was winter,
But it was spring I wanted,
The warmth
And the blossoming of nature.

I was a child,
But it was adulthood I wanted.
The freedom,
And the respect.

I was 20,
But it was 30 I wanted,
To be mature,
And sophisticated.

I was middle-aged,
But it was 20 I wanted,
The youth,
And the free spirit.

I was retired,
But it was middle age I wanted,
The presence of mind,
Without limitations.

My life was over.
But I never got what I wanted.

That poem fits a lot of folks that I know. They are always unhappy, always searching for contentment and almost always affecting others with their gloom along the way.

Someone said the three besetting sins of God's people are to whine, to pine, and to recline.

- We fume and fret about the noise the children make in the home rather than give thanks to God that they are healthy and happy.
- We mutter about the inadequacy of the house we live in, while thousands do not even have a house.
- We grumble about all the work we must do, while our hospitals are overcrowded with people who cannot work.
- We complain about having to eat the same old food all the time, while millions have nothing to eat.
- We complain about souls not being saved; yet seldom bring neighbors or strangers to church.

Little children in the poor section of the city were having a good time playing make believe by riding a stick-horse in the yard. A man who was passing by observed them playing and said to them, "Good morning! That's kind of a slow riding horse isn't it? Wouldn't you rather have a real horse?" "Yes, sir!" answered one of them, "but we don't have a real horse so we'll have the most fun we can with what we've got."

That's what Paul is teaching in this passage: getting the most fun out of what you have. Paul had learned the meaning of contentment. How we need to learn the same lesson.

Charles H. Spurgeon said, "If you are not content with what you have, you wouldn't be content if it were doubled."

Paul, with chains on his hands and feet, in a prison that was often dark and cold, facing death, closes his letter to the Philippians, encouraging them to be content.

He mentions four areas of contentment:

I. Content: In the Place Where God has Stationed You Philippians 4:10-12

In Paul's day people under arrest were not cared for by the state. It was up to the prisoners themselves to see that their physical needs were met. Paul had no visible means of support. He was totally dependent on the Lord and the Lord's people to meet his needs. Paul is voicing his gratitude for the Philippians' continued care of him.

The word "content" means "contained." It means "to be satisfied with, to be OK with, one who is not dependent on what was going on around him."

The word "learned" means "to learn the secret through personal experience." Paul means he has learned the secret of how to be at peace in himself whether in need or not.

Let me bring one more word to your attention in verse 11. It is the word "state." The word means "circumstances."

Now let me give you the thrust of what Paul is saying: "Whatever circumstances God allows me to be in, I have learned the secret through personal experience to be satisfied with whatever the Lord has for my life, because He is with me and I can trust Him to see me through anything."

There are two possibilities when it comes to circumstances, and we can be content in either. Why? God has initiated the circumstances of my life. God has Appointed ... Arranged ... and Approved every circumstances that comes in my life.

God appointed the Highs and Lows of life ... the Ups and Downs of life.

Paul uses the words "abased" and "abound" in verse 12.

The word "abasing" means "to humble or make low." It speaks of a river in the time of drought that runs low. Paul says, "I know what it means to run low and to be humbled by the circumstances."

The word "abounding" means "to overflow." Now the river is overflowing.

Paul had learned that whether rich or poor, high or low, it really didn't matter, he had learned to be content.

See I Timothy 6:6-10.

THE DIVINE WEAVER

My life is but a weaving

Between my Lord and me;

I cannot choose the colors

He worketh steadily.

Oftentimes He weaveth sorrow

And I in foolish pride,

Forget that He seeth the upper,

And I the under side.

Not till the loom is silent

And the shuttles cease to fly,

Shall God unroll the canvas

And explain the reason why.

The dark threads are as needful

In the Weaver's skillful hand,

As the threads of gold and silver

In the pattern He has planned.

II. Contentment: Because of the Power of God Which Strengthens You Philippians 4:13

I like the "I can" attitude of Paul. We have enough "I can't" and "I'm not sure I'm able" attitudes.

Notice: The word "strengthen." It means "to enable, to infuse." The mighty working power of God in the believer enabling him to do ALL things is a daily experience.

Some circumstances are not easy, but we can do anything through the strength of the One who lives within us.

III. Contentment: Because of the People Who Support You Philippians 4:14-18

One of the main purposes in writing this letter was that Paul wanted to express his gratitude for the gift that was sent to him by the church there in Philippi.

While he was thanking them for their care of him through their gift, he noted that there had been an interruption in their care of him – Philippians 4:10-11a, 16-18.

Paul is not scolding them for their interruption in caring for him (verse 14). He knew that they had tried to minister to him, but were unable – "they lacked opportunity."

Another thing is that Paul was not just begging for money. Paul was not that kind of person. He was not begging for money, he was asking them to make a heavenly investment – Philippians 4:17.

Paul does give them some good reasons for giving to God's work and for supporting missions.

1. Our giving to missions is like putting our gifts in a heavenly interest bearing account.

When we give to missions we draw spiritual interest off the labor and fruit of missionaries. Every time someone gets saved through the ministry of a missionary that you have financially helped, that soul is being credited to your account.

Martin Luther said, "I have held many things in my hands, and I have lost them all. But whatever I place in God's hand, that I still possess."

The final words of our Lord is a command for everyone of us as His children to be involved in world missions – Matthew 28:19-20.

2. Our giving is an act of worship. Philippians 4:18

During a mission emphasis the pastor was encouraging the folks to give. Someone said, "I believe in missions, but it cost so much." Then an elderly man stood and said, "Yes, missions is expensive, but I want to tell you about my son. My wife and I wanted a child so badly. We prayed and prayed, but it looked like we would not have a child. We assured God that if He would give us a child we would raise that child for Him. Then when my wife was forty we found out that we were going to have a child – a son! When he was born, there were complications and the doctor bill and the hospital bill were extremely high. Throughout his childhood days we continued to spend money on him. We fed him and clothed him and provided things for his amusement. It cost a lot. Then in his high-school days, he was even more expensive. He needed money for clothes, dates, a car, and many other things. But shortly after graduation he became very ill and God saw fit to take him from us. Now he doesn't cost us a cent." He paused and then said, "Folks, if your faith is not costing you anything, you may be sure it is dead."

IV. Contentment: When the Promise of God Sustains You. Philippians 4:19-20

This promise is often taken out of context. The context is giving to the Lord.

The principle involved in verse 18 must be acted upon first if the truth of verse 19 is to be enjoyed.

Only to those who are faithfully giving in an acceptable and well-pleasing way does God promise to supply Every need.

See Luke 6:38.

A little boy who lived out in the country had never seen a circus. On learning that one was coming to a nearby town, his father gave him money to go see it. When the boy reached the county seat, the circus parade was moving down the main street. He was thrilled as he stood and watched the amazing sight. The circus band, the glittering cages, the wild animals and the acrobats indelibly impressed the lad from the farm.

Then came the clowns, jesting and cavorting as they amused their audience. Suddenly one skipped over to the little boy, and after performing some of his antics, extended his hand to his admirer. The lad slowly handed the money his father had given him to the clown, for he thought, "This must be the circus."

After the parade was over, he went home. It was months later before he discovered that he had not seen the circus, but only the parade. This is indeed a picture of the man or woman who has never received Christ as Lord. Through the glitter and the glamor of THINGS in this world, they miss the MAIN THING: The peace and contentment one received when united to God through Jesus Christ.