

The Epistle of Paul the Apostle
to the
Philippians
a study by Dr. Grant C. Richison

Philippians, Chapter One

Philippians 1:1-3

Paul and Timothy, bond-servants of Christ Jesus, to all the saints in Christ Jesus who are in Philippi, including the overseers and deacons:

Grace to you and peace from God our Father and the Lord Jesus Christ.

I thank my God in all my remembrance of you,

"I thank my God"

Of the letters that Paul wrote, six of them were written from prison. It is an astonishing thought to think of how much of Paul's writing ministry took place in jail. He wrote Ephesians, Philippians, Colossians, Philemon, Hebrews (if Paul wrote Hebrews) and II Timothy while incarcerated. Paul would not let himself give way to self-pity. As a result we have this jubilant letter of joy.

1:3 begins the body of the letter, verses 1 and 2 were the salutation. This paragraph runs from verse 3 to 11, Paul's prayer for the saints.

Paul begins his prayer with thanksgiving. Whenever a group is worthy of his thanks he begins this way. There is only one group of churches for which Paul does not thank God--the Galatians. He just could not bring himself to thank God for them because of their doctrinal error.

"upon every remembrance of you"

"Every time I remember you, every time I think of you, I thank God." Paul's capacity for thanks was vast. Paul and the Philippians were separated by hundreds of miles and for a number of years yet his faculty for thanking God for them remained. The Philippians must have been a wonderful church with a great testimony in order to impress Paul so much. It would be a wonderful thing for other people to say of us, "I thank God for that person. I thank God that I met them, what a blessing they have been to me."

However, many of us have a testimony whereby people say, "I don't know what I did to have that

person come across my path! I thank God that I can forget that person!" Every believer is either a blessing or a curse; a wing or a weight; an asset or a liability. We either help people in their Christian life or hinder them.

Remembering brought no regrets for Paul; he had only blessed memories. Do you have a capacity to give thanks? Do you thank God for your church? Do you thank God for individuals in your church?

"UPON" does not mean "at." Paul does not thank God at every remembrance of the Philippians. It means "on the basis of." That is, the Philippians form the basis for Paul's thanksgiving.

There were unpleasant memories in Philippi if Paul cared to dwell on them--the rage of the masters of the girl set free from demons and the conduct of the city officials and populace toward Paul. Currently two women were locked in a bitter battle (4:2). But, Paul chose not to remember the petty irritations. Gratitude springs out of what we choose to think about. A common fault of the believer is to fail to thank God for the common courtesies and favors of life.

"every remembrance of you"

The Greek indicates that Paul thanked God for his entire connection with them

PRINCIPLE: It is important to recognize our current blessings are from God. That recognition is a capacity or faculty for appreciation of what God has brought into our lives.

APPLICATION: The word "thank" is in the present tense in the Greek and indicates a constant thankfulness. Do we intentionally and on a daily basis develop our capacity for appreciation for what God is doing in our lives?

Philippians 1:4

"always in every prayer of mine making request for you with all joy."

"always"

The word literally means "on all occasions." It did not make any difference what the occasion was. Whatever it was, wherever it was made no difference to Paul. He was independent from his circumstances.

"making request"

The Greek indicates that prayer was regularly given by Paul for the Philippians. Paul was in the habit of praying for them.

"for you"

The word "for" means "on behalf of." Paul was interceding for the Philippians. The prayer life of the apostle Paul was an incredible witness to his character. His prayers are constantly set forth in his epistles (Rom. 1:9; Eph 1:16; Co 1:3,9; I Thess. 1:1; II Thess. 1:11; Philemon 4).

"with joy"

"Joy" is emphatic by position in the Greek sentence. For him to pray for the Philippians was a joy. Paul entered a spiritual rhapsody when he entered prayer for the Philippians. Prayer was no mechanical duty whereby he labored to find words or thoughts as he forced prayer for them.

This joy was not mere excitement; it was not a commonplace pedantic necessity of life. However, this joy was a serenity of spirit in the face of adverse circumstances in which he was confident God was able to manage the problems. While sitting in jail Paul could do little for the Philippians. Yet he enjoyed a serenity of spirit which drew its reliance upon God. Paul was the most content man in Rome much less the Roman jail! His joy was irrepressible.

The word "with" in "with joy" means "accompanying." Joy had the company of prayer! Have you found joy in prayer?

PRINCIPLE: There is joy in prayer; therefore, there should be no reluctance and misgivings when we pray. We should have an attitude of expectation of God's intervention with accompanying joy.

APPLICATION: Have you evaluated your attitudes in prayer? Is it a duty or task? Is your attitude "accompanied by joy?"

Philippians 1:5

"For your fellowship in the gospel from the first day until now"

Paul is in the process of thanking God for the Philippians. He says, "I thank my God upon every remembrance of you...for your fellowship in the gospel..." One reason Paul thanked God was for the fellowship they had with him in getting the gospel out.

Of all the churches with which Paul was associated, it is quite obvious that the church at Philippi was the closest to his heart. He loved them all, but they loved him more than other churches did. "I wish I could be out of jail and be with you folks."

"for"

"For" means "on the basis of." Paul gave thanks on the basis of some substance. Paul's capacity for thanksgiving went beyond warm "fuzzies." His love for them had a basis to it-- their participation in advancing the gospel.

"fellowship"

This word means "a community of interest, cooperation, share things in common." The Philippian church participated in the gospel. Their interest was getting the gospel out. They cooperated in advancing the cause of Christ.

They had a partnership in the gospel. An old saying about fellowship among Christians is that it is "two fellows in one ship." They had a partnership with Paul in getting the gospel out to the world. That is partnership in the gospel.

"from the first day until now"

This church supported the apostle Paul from the first day they met until the moment he was writing them sitting in jail. They never forgot him. They continued to support him. It is now over ten years later and their commitment is still faithful to him. No wonder he thanked God for them.

In the last chapter at verse ten Paul says, "But I rejoiced in the Lord greatly that now at last your care for me has flourished again; though you surely did care, but you lacked opportunity. Not that I speak in regard to need, for I have learned in whatever state I am, to be content. I know how to be abased, and I know how to abound. Everywhere and in all things I have learned both to be

full and to be hungry, both to abound and to suffer need." (4:10-12) Paul is talking here about financial support. Of all the churches the Philippian church was the church that remembered that Paul had a stomach as well as a soul.

There were occasions when they lost track of him. But whenever they found him they supported him financially.

The Greek indicates that their commitment to him was unbroken--"until (the) now." In the Greek the word "now" has a definite article before it. This means right up to the moment Paul was sitting in jail they were still supporting him. They had sent a messenger from Philippi to give Paul financial support. That messenger almost lost his life in the process of doing so.

PRINCIPLE: Getting the gospel out requires joint participation. Paul views those of us who support messengers of the gospel as participating in evangelism.

APPLICATION: Have you given yourself to the missionary cause--heart and soul? What are you doing in a concrete manner to participate in advancing the gospel?

Philippians 1:6

"Being confident of this very thing, that he who has begun a good work in you will complete it until the day of Jesus Christ;"

"confident"

"I am persuaded of this. I am certain of this." Paul was certain that the God who launched a good work in the Philippians would continue it. When God begins the work of salvation in us he will finish it. God never starts anything that he cannot finish. When God begins a work in us he will see it through to completion.

God will either work in us or he will work on us but he will finish the job. He will finish it whether we want it finished or not! Once we have come to know Christ we cannot say, "stop the process, I want out." Paul says, "I am certain of this; this is not debatable; I am sure; I am confident."

It was this confidence that gave Paul joy. "Confidence" means to come to a conclusion based on a reasonable ground. God has taken care of billions

of people over thousands of years and has not let one person down. Paul's confidence was in the capacity of God, not in men. The Greek tense indicates that this was a settled confidence in Paul's mind. Paul's faith in God's ability to finish what he starts did not waver.

"that he who has begun a good work in you"

God began it; God will finish it. At the point of salvation God did a complete job. In no way was it inadequate or incomplete. God did the most that he could for us in our salvation. Here is the principle of this passage: if God did the most for us at salvation when we were his enemies, what can he do now that we are his children? Answer: much more than the most. This is a paradox but note what he says in the next phrase.

"will complete it until..."

The word means "to bring to a completed end." God finishes what he starts. He puts his finishing touches on it.

Many people are bedeviled by the idea that God may lose control of their situation. But God will not give up on us. He will let us go about as far as a dog on a leash. When we run from the Lord and come to the end of our leash we come to a terrible jerk. "The Lord will perfect that which concerns me" (Ps. 138:8).

God is in the business of keeping regenerated people regenerated. There is the finished work of Christ and there is the unfinished work of Christ. "For if when we were enemies we were reconciled to God through the death of His Son, much more, having been reconciled, we shall be saved by His life" (Rom. 5:10). "Shall be saved by His life" means that he is keeping saved people saved. What life is he talking about here? The life after Jesus died. His life in glory. The glorious life of the exalted Son of God will keep us saved from the power of sin. "Therefore He is also able to save to the uttermost those who come to God through Him, since He always lives to make intercession for them" (Heb 7:25). This verse is speaking about saving a saint. He is living at this moment to save saints. Jesus saves us from both the penalty and the power of sin.

Once we have become part of the family of God there is no way we can become disowned. Once

born we cannot become unborn. Your human father or mother may be disgraced by your life, but you are still their son or daughter. However, in the family of God we can go only so far and then God's loving discipline will go into effect.

God always finishes what he starts. This is the point of Paul's confidence. This is the place where we leave self confidence. Either God will finish it in time or in eternity, but he will finish it. Paul could leave that in God's hands.

PRINCIPLE: The unfinished work of Christ intercedes for us in time.

APPLICATION: Do we have confidence in Christ's present work for us? Can we trust him to intercede for whatever we are currently facing?

In the first part of verse six Paul expressed his confidence that God who had commenced a good work in them, the work of salvation, would consummate it all the way to the time when Jesus comes back again.

Now we come to the last part of verse six...

"until the day of Christ"

The word "day" is used three ways in Scripture: a twenty-four hour day; less than a twenty-four hour day (when Jesus comes in a twinkling of an eye); more than a twenty-four hour period (Day of the Lord; millennium).

Grace is followed by "more grace." In grace God saved us from the penalty of sin; in grace God saves us from the power of sin; in grace God saves us from the presence of sin. The "good work" which was begun at the cross will continue in time and on into eternity. That is "more grace."

The expression "the day of Christ" occurs a half dozen times in the New Testament and three of those six occur in Philippians. It always refers to the time when Christ comes to catch the church away.

"...that you may be sincere and without offense 'till the day of Christ" (1:10).

"...holding fast the word of life, so that I may rejoice in the day of Christ that I have not run in vain or labored in vain" (2:16).

"...eagerly waiting for the revelation of our Lord Jesus Christ, who will also confirm you to the end,

that you may be blameless in the day of our Lord Jesus Christ" (I Co. 1:7,8).

"...deliver such a one to Satan for the destruction of the flesh, that his spirit may be saved in the day of the Lord Jesus" (I Co. 5:5).

"...(as also you have understood us in part), that we are your boast as you also are ours, in the day of the Lord Jesus" (II Co. 1:14).

This is the day of the consummation of our salvation, the first resurrection; all of which takes place at the same time. This is the next day in God's prophetic program.

"The night is far spent, the day is at hand. Therefore let us cast off the works of darkness, and let us put on the armor of light" (Rom. 13:12).

This day is the same day of Ephesians 4:30, "And do not grieve the Holy Spirit of God, by whom you were sealed for the day of redemption." The "day of redemption" is the day of the redemption of our bodies. That is the day when our physical bodies will be redeemed. We will be saved physically then. That is the day we will receive everything the Saviour purchased on the cross. Right now we have spiritual redemption. In that day I will no longer need glasses or dentures or artificial limbs. Our body will be fashioned like his glorified body (Phil. 3:21).

PRINCIPLE: God has given us grace in our salvation but he is not finished with giving us grace. There is "more grace" yet for the Christian both in time and eternity.

APPLICATION: Do you always look to your past salvation? Do you look to your current and future salvation? God has given us more than one kind of grace.

Philippians 1:7

"Just as it is right for me to think this of you all, because I have you in my heart, inasmuch as both in my chains and in the defense and confirmation of the gospel, you all are partakers with me of grace."

"right for me to think"

It is proper or fitting for Paul to think what he is thinking. "For as he thinks in his heart, so is he" (Prov. 23:7).

The word for "think" means to have in mind, to hold a mental attitude about something. Paul held an attitude toward the Philippians. An attitude is a habit of thinking. Paul had a habit of thinking about the subject of verse seven. He formed this attitude based on divine viewpoint. That is why his attitude was proper. Without the Word of God he would not have standards or criteria by which he could form judgments about values. The measuring stick for forming attitudes in the Christian realm is God's Word. If we did not have a standard not only could we not distinguish between good and bad but we could not distinguish between good and good. We would not be able to put priority on important things. We need "the mind of Christ" (I Co. 2:16).

"because I have you in my heart"

Paul had taught the Philippians and it was his responsibility to think about them. It is important for leadership to think about the people they lead in the light of the Word of God.

The word "heart" means the total person. This word means far more than the emotional life of the believer. In North American society we think of "heart" in terms of either Valentine's Day or the physical pump for the body. The biblical term means neither. Paul had thought about the Philippians in terms of his total person. He gave his total self to them.

In II Co. 7:3 Paul says, "I do not say this to condemn; for I have said before that you are in our hearts, to die together and to live together." Ministry was not just a job or profession to Paul. God's people were on Paul's heart. They had hold of him; they were part of him.

"inasmuch as both in my chains and in the defense and confirmation of the gospel"

"In my chains"--Paul was in prison.

Paul had the Philippians in his heart in two categories: in both the defense and confirmation of the gospel. The folks at Philippi were partners with Paul in defending the gospel and confirming the gospel. They were in it together. They were both on the same team.

Paul did not manufacture the message; he simply passed it on and they accepted it at face value. The

message did for the Philippians what it did for Paul on the way to Damascus many years before. Now they are partners in the defense and confirmation of the gospel.

The gospel is defended with words and confirmed with works. We defend the gospel with our lips and confirm the gospel with our life. It is one thing to speak the gospel; it is another thing to live it out. That is quite another matter. So there are two things that need to be done with the gospel: to affirm (defend) it and confirm it. To confirm the gospel means to ratify it, reinforce it, underscore it. We give credence to the gospel when we live the gospel; people are inclined to believe the gospel if they can see a demonstration of someone living the gospel.

What has the gospel done for you? Has the gospel transformed your way of living? Did the gospel ever help you? Yes? Then tell me how. This is what it means to bear a testimony. To confirm the gospel means to report what the gospel did for you. "Before I became a Christian I was thus and so and now that I am a Christian I am this." That is what it means to confirm the gospel.

"Confirmation" means guarantee, firm establishment or security. It means to establish something so that it becomes a guarantee or security. The gospel is secured guaranteed by our life.

PRINCIPLE: There are two aspects to sharing Christ: the lip and the life. Both are necessary to present a total package in our representation of Christ.

APPLICATION: Are we manifesting the gospel, confirming the gospel with a changed life? Do you give credence to the gospel?

"you all are partakers with me of grace."

"Partakers" means partners. The Philippians were part of Paul's gospel team even though they were separated by hundreds of miles. God never intended that one individual do all the serving and producing. That is the point of the allocation of spiritual gifts to every believer. We are all partners and on the same team. That is why every believer is a priest and an ambassador of Christ. The life of every believer has definition and purpose.

There are not many Christian articles about the person who goes to work everyday and lives out his routine. No one writes about ordinary events: "The thrilling story of his ride downtown on the bus and how the air conditioning went out which almost caused heat prostration!" No, people do not write about the daily routine. They are much more likely to write about an overseas adventure.

No matter how much monotony people may have in their life, if they are serving Jesus Christ, they are in partnership with believers all over the world. No matter how much our lives may be in a rut, our lives are just as important as any person on the mission field or in any other area of Christian service. It is just as difficult to live a conventional life as a life of adventure.

It is a great strain for sports writers to write about linemen. It is much easier to write about the 80 yard run and how many touch downs were made. Without great linemen there would be no great running backs. The "silent partners" of the apostle Paul were the Philippians. Without people who give to Christian work and those who work behind the scene, little would be accomplished for the cause of Christ. Many of the Philippians had routine experiences yet they were partners with the great apostle Paul. Paul travelled all over the Roman empire yet many of the Philippians did not get much farther than the outskirts of the city.

The people in Philippi supported Paul both spiritually and materially. They not only shared in the same grace that brought Paul to Christ but they shared in the same grace that made Paul a missionary. They shared in Paul's ministry.

Every time they helped Paul financially they had a stake in his work; they had a share in his work; they had shares in him. "I have invested \$500 in Paul's ministry; I have invested \$1000 in his ministry." Would it not be great to have a \$500 share in the ministry of Paul?! Just think of the dividends that would come back at the judgment seat of Christ! Do you look on evangelistic enterprises like that? We would have a share in an evangelist. That eternal investment would pay dividends in glory.

"...for you had compassion on me in my chains, and joyfully accepted the plundering of your goods, knowing that you have a better and endur-

ing possession for yourselves in heaven" (Heb 10:34)

Every time an evangelist wins someone to the Lord we get a percentage of that at the judgment seat of Christ. God keeps the books.

When people see a boxer with potential they buy stock in that young man. It is a business deal. Maybe five men will buy stock in him. They expect to get their money back and some profit. When we invest in the Lord's work we expect something back, not here but hereafter. God does not expect you to invest and get nothing in return. God's returns will be beyond our expectations. The world operates on the basis of money but what will it yield? When we invest our dollar we want to get the best return. When we invest in God's work we get eternal returns.

PRINCIPLE: We share ministry with those we support.

APPLICATION: Are we investing our resources with an eye on eternity?

Philippians 1:8

"For God is my witness, how greatly I long for you all with the affection of Jesus Christ."

"For God is my witness"

There is no verb in this phrase and the word "God" is very emphatic. God knows all the facts. God knows everything Paul is thinking. He knows whether the statement I am about to make is true.

This is intense language. Paul was a man of dead earnestness. This is the same as to say, "God is my witness," "God knows I am telling the truth." Paul uses this language a number of times in his epistles. You would think that this would not be necessary since an apostle is doing the communicating. But he was a man of such dead sincerity that he feared others would think that he was resorting to exaggeration.

Paul is telling the Philippians how much he loved them. It was common then, as it is now, to tell people you love them and not be genuine about it. There are a lot of people who go around uttering sweet clichés. Some people are Pollyanna in their dealings with other people. Paul did not want to leave the impression that his love was cosmetic, sketchy and surface.

Paul knew his heart well enough to call God to witness to it. He knew he was not manipulating them. He knew the purity of his own heart. How many of us could say that? How many of us could call upon God to witness to the authenticity of our character and statements?

"how greatly I loved you all"

"Long for" means earnestly desire. This is a strong word for affection.

Paul says, "I would dearly love to see you. I would love to get out of prison and come to see you. One of the first places I will head is Philippi to see you when I am released." Paul was eventually released and made the trip to Philippi. Later he was rearrested and the last time he was in prison he wrote II Timothy. When he wrote II Timothy he knew he was not going to be released.

"with the affection of Jesus Christ"

This was Paul's way of saying, "I love you." The word "affection" means the inward parts. Metaphorically it means the seat of feelings. Paul had deep feelings for the Philippians. In fact, he had the same feelings that Jesus himself had for them! They evidently knew that Jesus had a deep inner love for them. Now Paul wants them to know that he has that same love for them. No wonder he took a solemn oath to prove it.

PRINCIPLE: It was Paul's desire to accurately communicate his love for the Philippians. He felt it necessary to disclose his heart for them.

APPLICATION: Do you have a dedication to tell those close to you that you love them? To what extremity will you go to do this?

Philippians 1:9

"And this I pray, that your love may abound still more and more in knowledge and all discernment,"

"and this I pray"

In verses 9 to eleven we come to one of the splendid prayers of Paul. Paul's prayers are very suggestive. They are never superficial and half-hearted. They are always germane to the situation. This prayer has the very whiff of heaven. Paul's prayers are a high water mark of spirituality in the New Testament. A person ought to be at their best

when at prayer. Prayer is conversing with God. The white heat of the flame of God's presence melts way all superficiality in our lives.

In this prayer there are three petitions all of which begin with the word "that." Verse nine is the first "that."

"that your love may abound"

The first essential that Paul prays about is that their love may "abound." It is one thing to have love; it is yet another to have abounding love. Their love needed to be enlarged.

The word "abound" means to overflow, to be over and above, more than enough. This is a love that dominates one's life. Love is no mere category. In unbiblical love there are categories of love. In one category there is love yet in another category there is bitterness and resentment.

"still more and more"

Here is a piling up of adverbs, an exuberance of love. Wave after wave of love should hit the banks of our souls. The more we grow in grace the greater is our capacity to love. One way we know we are growing is how much we love the unlovely.

We rub elbows with people who are more difficult than others. All people do not appeal to us equally. It may be their disposition, their dress or their way of doing things. If we love with abounding love all that melts away. All that is irrelevant. We do not love them for their sake; we love them for Jesus' sake.

So the first earmark of a growing Christian is a dynamic love which is both over and against a static love. Immature Christians wax angry at the drop of a hat; they become exasperated quickly; they are aggravated by people who do not seem to appreciate them. But as we grow more and more in love those things become petty. In the light of the stern realities of heaven and hell, sin and righteousness, God and the Devil, such things become irrelevant and inconsequential. They are too tawdry to deflect the child of God from his original purpose of glorifying God with his life.

When we let people get under our skin or in our hair, when we let people vex our souls, we are deflected from reflecting God's glory in our lives.

When children do something in an immature way people say "that's baby fat, they will outgrow it." Feeling slighted is something we outgrow when we grow in love.

PRINCIPLE: Biblical love is dynamic; it both abounds and keeps developing so that it moves the child of God out of childhood and into spiritual adulthood.

APPLICATION: Are we still caught up in bitterness and indignation? Are we trapped at the initial stages of Christianity? Have we recognized signs of babyhood?

We have already examined 1:9a where we found that our love needed to "abound still more and more." However, a dynamic love is not complete without some other norms. In 1:9b we find two norms which are necessary for a dynamic love: knowledge and discernment.

"in knowledge"

Paul's prayer is that love will abound in knowledge. This word knowledge means full, experiential knowledge. To love in God's economy is to love beyond emotion and feeling. There is something at the foundation of this love.

To love in knowledge means that we do not call every "honey" or "darling." This is not saccharin, imitation love. This is not authentic love. Authentic love loves on the basis of substance or content.

Love has nothing to fear from light. Suspicion puts the light out; it kills love. Intense love makes people sensitive to slights and misunderstandings unless they apply full knowledge. This word denotes fineness of perception.

Knowledge is important for any specialist in any field. I do not want my plumber to perform surgery on me. Neither do I want my surgeon to work on my plumbing! Each specialist is adept at his specialty because of what he knows. A Christian is to be a specialist in love. That love is to abound in knowledge. An indifferent, vague, sloppy love is not Christian love. It is an informed love.

Love grows best in the radiant light of knowledge.

"and all discernment"

Knowledge is the accumulation of facts. Discernment, however, is an advance upon knowledge.

Discernment is the correct use of the facts. But we must have knowledge to have discernment.

The more we know the more we can divide things that differ. We can separate and make distinctions. Discerning love can tell the difference between maudlin love and authentic love. Maudlin love may not employ "tough love" when necessary. Maudlin love loves on the basis of sympathy, not empathy.

PRINCIPLE: Authentic love requires both knowledge and discernment. As well, God wants us to "abound still more and more" in love that loves on the basis of knowledge and discernment.

APPLICATION: Do you love purely with your emotions? Can you dislike someone and still love them? It is valid biblically to deplore the foolishness of an individual and still love them.

Philippians 1:10

"That you may approve the things that are excellent, that you may be sincere and without offense till the day of Christ."

In this passage we have two more items for which Paul prays. Today we will study the second petition--"that you may approve the things that are excellent."

"that you may approve"

The word "approve" means test for approval. This is spiritual discernment. Discernment is the ability to distinguish between the chaff and wheat, the dross and the gold, the genuine and the superficial.

Automobiles need to be tested on a torture track before they are sold to the public. If a car's breaks do not meet the test they are sent back for redesign. You do not put a car with faulty breaks on the market. Lives are at stake. In order to test those breaks some standard for testing needs to be applied. A standard or measure for what is good breaks is needed. God wants us to test for approval, have a criterion for whatever comes into our lives. That criterion is "excellence."

If we have this criterion we can resolve the priorities of our life. Any problem or set of alternatives which is set before us should be measured by this standard. If we operate by this standard we should be able to resolve any priority.

"the things that are excellent"

"Excellence" is a sense of what is vital. Greek--excellence means to bear apart, like metals, you learn how they differ from lesser metals. So excellence means things of greater value.

We should be able to test for approval the things which are the most valuable in life. None of us operate in life without some scale of values. The question is not whether we have a scale of values but the question is more which scale of values we choose. Do we choose God's highest values or some set of values we may choose?

Where there is no scale of values utter confusion follows. If we want to live a flustered life, then live life without an adequate set of ultimate values. In this situation nothing is of value, nothing of importance. To live life with everything of equal importance is to live life at a trivial level. Lesser things are as important as greater things.

If we choose our ultimate value to make and save as much money possible, then we have chosen a lesser value in God's economy. If we choose to put God's glory first no matter how much money we make, then we live by God's scale of values. It is a matter of what comes first. If our main objective is to make money then we are number one in our values and God is number two. We need to decide what is important.

PRINCIPLE: Christians need to test for approval the things of greatest value in God's economy.

APPLICATION: Do we have God's scale of values? What is the highest item on our scale of values? What is first or most important to us? A good way to measure these questions is how do we use our time? Answering these things will reveal what is important in our lives. Then we will have a sense of what is vital.

Verse ten is the second and third petitions of Paul for the Philippians. Today we will study the third petition "that you may be sincere and without offense till the day of Christ."

"that you may be sincere"

"Sincere" literally means "unmixed, pure, unsullied." Therefore, this word means to be genuine or authentic.

The word "sincere" comes from two Greek words: "sun" and "to judge." It means to judge by holding up to the light of the sun. Broken pottery in the ancient world was often covered with wax and painted over. People were deceived into thinking they were buying a sound vase, for example. However, if a person were to hold this vase up to the sun, the sun would reveal the cracks.

The believer should be transparent, when held up to the light of the sun, of who God is. There is nothing to hide. No "wax" can be found in his life. There is no dilution or hypocrisy. God expects us to be the "real thing."

"and without offense"

"Without offense" is blameless. The word means "a trap." This was a crooked stick on which a bait is fastened, which, being struck by the animal, springs the trap. Therefore, it is anything which one stumbles against.

The believer is to be void of offense. This word also occurs in I Cor. 10:32, "Giving no offense, either to the Jews or to the Greeks or to the church of God."

One of the greatest criticisms the world has of the church is that it is "hypocritical." This has become a standard, stock excuse that those without Christ have for not receiving Christ. "There are too many hypocrites in church."

We admit that there are hypocrites in church. Yet there are hypocrites at the office. Do we quit work because there are hypocrites? Do we turn in our membership at the lodge because people are inconsistent? There is hypocrisy about hypocrisy!

The teaching of the Word of God has a tendency to create a spiritual atmosphere that is difficult for hypocrites to thrive in it. They become annoyed by the hammer like blows of the Word upon their lives. If we are not genuine, if we are a counterfeit Christian, a make-believe Christian sitting under the conviction of the Word, we will become more of a counterfeit or move out from under the influence of God upon our lives.

"till the day of Christ"

This is the day when Christ comes back again. This day terminates the Christian life in time for all Christians.

Paul prays in this phrase that the Philippians will live an authentic life and a life that is not susceptible of censure until Christ comes again.

PRINCIPLE: When people examine our lives God wants us to be viewed as authentic ("without wax"). If people see that Christians are genuine then they will not have an occasion for accusing us of hypocrisy.

APPLICATION: Have you moved into a mode of covering rather than confessing your sin? Is it more comfortable for you to rationalize sin than to deal with it?

Philippians 1:11

"Being filled with the fruits of righteousness which are by Jesus Christ to the glory and praise of God."

Verse eleven sets forth the characteristics of those who produce the three requests for which Paul prays:

1. "...that your love may abound still more and more in knowledge and all discernment,"
2. "that you may approve the things that are excellent,"
3. "that you may be sincere and without offense till the day of Christ,"

Those who have these characteristics in their lives will produce fruit.

"being filled with the fruits of righteousness"

"Being" indicates this is something we receive. We receive it by God's grace. We do not earn it or work for it.

"Fruits" is singular in the Greek. This may refer to the filling of the Holy Spirit. This is the produce of righteousness. The harvest.

"Of righteousness"--produced by Christ and so supernatural. The word "of" indicates source this is imputed righteousness (righteousness which God unilaterally gives). The believer has a righteous stand before God, resulting from being clothed in Christ's righteousness, ought to produce fruit for God. Practical righteousness is to flow from what God has done.

Filled with the fruits of uprightness which come through Jesus Christ: The term of Christian growth and development is the status of upright-

ness before God, yet it is not a status that one achieves by oneself; rather it is begun by God (1:6) and has its fullness in that which comes only through union with Christ (see 3:9).

Such inner qualities, partially described in Galatians 5:22-23, will be evident to others. The fruit of the Spirit comes through Jesus Christ, for it is really His life lived out through believers. Such fruit magnifies God, not self.

PRINCIPLE: God is the source for the fruit that is produced in our lives. God has given us imputed righteousness (a legal righteousness which he put in us) so that we might produce a practical righteousness.

APPLICATION: Do we recognize the "harvest" of God's work upon us? Do we praise him for what he has done?

"which are by Jesus Christ"

"By" means "through" instrumentality. It is through the instrumentality of Christ that fruit is produced in our lives. The Greek has a definite article before the word "through"--"the through" "by that I mean the kind which is through Jesus Christ." This would mean by the death of Christ on the cross, for example. The death of Christ makes it possible to be delivered from our sins. The death of Christ makes it possible to live the Christian life.

"for the glory and praise of God."

A life that exhibits such traits is to the glory and praise of God. God produced the fruit so God gets the glory for doing it. If God does the doing, God gets the glory.

God is glorified by the fruitfulness he produces in our lives, John 15:8, "In this is my Father glorified...bear much fruit". There are three kinds of Christians in this passage: those that bear "fruit", "more fruit" and "much fruit." But there is no such thing as no fruit in the Christian. If a person is a believer there is going to be fruit.

The purpose of Christ's death was to glorify God. His attributes are glorified such as righteousness, justice, mercy and love in his death. As in 2:11 the career of Jesus and his influence on man are ordained only for the glory of the Father (cf. Rom 15:7; 1 Cor 10:31; 2 Cor 4:15).

We glorify God by utilizing divine provisions. Glory is provided inside each believer because the Holy Spirit resides in each believer, I Co 3:16; 6:19,20. The ministry of the Holy Spirit produces the character of Christ in the believer, Gal 4:19; II Co 3:3,18; Eph 3:17; Gal 5:22,23.

Matt. 5:16 "Let your light so shine before men, that they may see your good works, and glorify your Father which is in heaven."

I Pet 4:11 "If any man speak, let him speak as the oracles of God; if any man minister, let him do it as of the ability which God gives: that God in all things may be glorified through Jesus Christ, to whom be praise and dominion for ever and ever."

PRINCIPLE: If God does the doing in our lives, he gets the glory. If we do the doing, we get the glory.

APPLICATION: One of the saddest things in the family of God is a case of arrested spiritual development. We reach a spiritual plateau and there we remain. We need to realize that something is stunting our growth. We need our spiritual vitamins.

Paul prayed for the Philippian church for 3 things. What KIND OF GRADE would you get on these 3 items? Each one would count 1/3. If you have all three you get a 100!

How would you make out with love for 1994? If your mate would grade you, what would you get?

How would you do on discernment? Did you live your life with a sense of priority?

How did you do with glorifying God by righteousness? Did you live before Him as His exclusive use.

Philippians 1:12

"But I want you to know, brethren, that the things which happened to me have actually turned out for the furtherance of the gospel."

We now turn from Paul's prayer for the Philippians to Paul's attitude about being jailed (1:12-24). His attitude is connected closely with how he viewed God's sovereign hand on his situation.

The Philippian church was deeply concerned about Paul. They loved him. Under God, they owed their salvation to him. When Paul left Phi-

lippi for the last time they lost track of him. Paul had gone back to Jerusalem. He was arrested and spent two years in jail in Caesarea. He was shipped to Rome and imprisoned there where finally the Philippians found him.

In this section Paul is assuring the Philippian church. He is alleviating their fears to calm their concern for him.

"But I want you to know"

Invariably the very thing God wants us to know is the thing about which we are most ignorant. Here Paul puts it in the positive--"I want you to know."

Hebrews 11:3 says "By faith we understand that the worlds were framed by the word of God..." That is a difficult concept to grasp for a non-Christian. They can understand: "by brains we understand;" "by education we understand"; "by intuition we understand". The Christian, however, understands that faith is crucial to understand divine things. Especially when it comes to coming to grips with the adversity we face, faith is foundational to coping with the pain.

"that the things which happened to me"

Paul was in danger of death and this put great pressure on his confidence in God's plan for his life. Very shortly he may be dead. Yet he makes a clear appraisal of his situation from God's viewpoint.

In the New King James Version the words "which happened" are in italics which means that these words are not in the original text. Nothing just happened to Paul. Nothing just happens to us. There are no "rotten breaks" or "bad luck" for the Christian. Everything that comes into the life of the child of God comes by divine design. Our lives are divinely ordered. Good health, poor health; prosperity, poverty; all of these God mixes into our lives with a clear blueprint in his mind. All of the specifications are in God's plan for your life.

There is no accident, no luck, no coincident with the believer. Paul left Philippi the last time in Acts 20. In Acts 28 he is in prison at Rome where he wrote the book of Philippians. These are the "things which happened to me." Some mighty ugly things happened to him. He lay in prison in Caesarea without a fair trial. During that time he

could not do his missionary work freely. From a human viewpoint it appeared that his time there was wasted. Again, at Rome he is in jail. God had a definite plan in all this as we will see in the ensuing verses.

PRINCIPLE: God is sovereignly in control of every thing that happens to us. God wants us to "know" this principle for sure.

APPLICATION: Do you "know" that God's hand is sovereignly working in your life? Do you believe that God has a divine design behind every situation, event, blessing and burden you face?

In our study of the first phrase we saw that there are no accidents in the life of the child of God. Now Paul demonstrates what this means in his own life.

"have actually turned out for the furtherance of the gospel."

The phrase "turned out" is in a tense which means the action was completed in the past with the results remaining unto the present. His imprisonment and near death experience has had a permanent effect on advancing the gospel!! Man proposes but God disposes. The best laid plans of men are not adequate for God's designs for the universe.

God overruled all the unfortunate events of Paul's life. He took Paul's imprisonment and turned it into a benefit. Souls have come to personally know Jesus Christ as their Saviour as a result of his incarceration.

This same principle is found in Romans 8:28, "And we know (this is often something we do not know) that all things work together for good to those who love God, to those who are the called according to His purpose." God does not make a mistake. God is too good to do wrong and too wise to make a mistake. If we are in deep pain at the present time it is no mistake. God is in control of everything. Nothing is capricious with God. He manages every thing that comes into our lives and works them together into a pattern which will result in "good."

We may be disappointed from the standpoint of our personal design; however, from God's design he has something better in mind. God knows our plight better than we do. God knows the future.

He has not chosen to reveal to us everything in that plan. He is infinite and we are finite. Finiteness cannot fully comprehend infiniteness. We do not have to take an exam on "why" God has allowed our predicament to happen. We will take an exam on our confidence in God's plan for our life. If we flunk it, we will have to take the course and exam again.

PRINCIPLE: Man proposes plans but God often disposes of them. A finite mind can never compete with an infinite God and his plans for man.

APPLICATION: Are we willing to flex our lives so that we submit to God's plan even though it may be different from ours?

We come to the last phrase of verse twelve. This is the reason for the sovereign hand of God upon Paul.

The word "furtherance" was used to refer to a group of people who cut brush and trees down in an impenetrable forest before an advancing army. The word means literally "to cut down in advance."

The point here is that "the things which happened" to Paul "advanced" the gospel. The adverse circumstances were the divine wood cutters. How could losing his liberty by imprisonment "advance" the gospel? He was chained to a Roman guard. He had what appears to us handicaps to preach the gospel. He was no longer free to roam the Roman Empire. But to Paul these hindrances were stepping stones to further the gospel throughout the Empire.

Paul had travelled thousands of miles to advance the gospel, how can he now say that the gospel has advanced while he is in prison? He is now in one location. He does not have a great number of contacts with non-Christians.

As we will see in the next verse, he led some strategic people in the Roman Empire to the Lord Jesus. Instead of one person carrying the gospel to the Empire, it is now a number of people. These were people of great influence politically. Instead of everyone banking on Paul to do the strategic evangelism, now his number has multiplied. One of the most important things that ever happened to Paul was that he was put into jail. The number of people dispersing the gospel has multiplied.

Going into prison he thought that his missionary career was ruined. It seemed to him as if his years in jail were going to be wasted. But God overruled the Roman Empire! God expanded his number. Many more people came to Christ as a result.

THE GOSPEL

In verse 5 we have the phrase "fellowship in the gospel," in verse 7 "confirmation of the gospel" and now "furtherance of the gospel." The gospel is one of the cardinal reasons for our taking up space on earth. What part have we played in the furtherance of the gospel? God is far more interested in the furtherance of the gospel than he is in politics. Are we coupled to the Great Commission? The reason Paul could recognize God's plan for his imprisonment is that it advanced the gospel.

When we get to the Judgment Seat of Christ, God is not going to ask us how well we manicured our lawns. He is going to ask us what part we played in advancing the cause of Christ. Obviously God wants us to care for our lawns, if only for our neighbor's mental health! It is a question of majoring on majors. However, we often major on minors. We make much ado about things of little consequence. We squander our energies. We prostitute our time making religious daisy chains.

PRINCIPLE: God's plans to use us transcend our ability to anticipate, from a finite perspective, the global strategy of reaching those without Christ. God has factored adversity into our lives. This often makes no sense to us but nevertheless advances the gospel.

APPLICATION: Are you absorbed in advancing the gospel? Have you placed yourself in the infinite hands of God to get the gospel out?

Philippians 1:13

"so that it has become evident to the whole palace guard, and to all the rest, that my chains are in Christ;"

Now we come to the results of God's sovereignly placing Paul in prison. There are two results, two ways his adversity advanced the cause of Christ.

1. The impact his imprisonment had on non-Christians, v13.
2. The effect his incarceration had upon believers, v14.

Today we examine the first result.

"so that it has become evident to the whole palace guard"

"So that" is a result clause.

Paul had become a celebrated prisoner. He was renowned not because he had committed a crime; he was notable because of his testimony. He was in jail for Jesus' sake.

The "palace guard" was the Praetorian guard. This group was instituted by Augustus Caesar. They were the emperor's private bodyguard. They were an elite troop. Eventually they became the king makers; they appointed the Caesar. As Rome conquered the nations of the world these men were appointed to rule over them. Obviously this band of men were strategic in the Roman Empire.

Paul had become a famous prisoner to the Praetorian guard. Some of these men came to trust Christ as their Saviour. Note the last chapter, "All the saints greet you, but especially those who are of Caesar's household" (4:22). Paul was able to reach a segment of society normally out of reach of most Christians of the time. The conventional arm of the church could not reach these men. No wonder God had a design for his imprisonment! After these men came to Christ they went throughout the empire sharing their faith. Paul had multiplied himself strategically in the Roman Empire.

Evidently the church at Rome was typically ineffective in reaching these men. Paul came to Rome as a prisoner and was able to evangelize this Praetorian guard. He had a captive audience. One guard at a time was chained to him. Each shift he had a new opportunity to share Christ. Can you imagine the talk of the barracks? "Have you been chained to that Paul yet? Boy, are you going to get an ear full! All he can talk about is that Jesus Christ and his death and resurrection for our sins."

Paul was an effective witness one man at a time. That is where most Christians fail--one on one testimony. The most effective way to reach people for Christ is one on one. I doubt that any of the Praetorian guards attended the stated services of the church in Rome or any evangelistic services. We are the best witness to our relatives, neighbors and friends. We are the best Christians some people

know; it may be that we are the only Christians some people know.

"that my chains are in Christ"

Paul never lost perspective that is was not the Roman Empire which placed him in jail. He was not a prisoner of Caesar but of Jesus Christ. The sovereign hand of God put him there.

PRINCIPLE: Each soldier presented to Paul a fresh opportunity to preach Christ to a strategic group of people in the Roman Empire. Because of Paul's confinement he was able to multiply himself many times. The gospel spread much faster because of it.

APPLICATION: Are you sharing your faith one on one?

Philippians 1:14

"and most of the brethren in the Lord, having become confident by my chains, are much more bold to speak the word without fear."

We come to the second result of Paul's imprisonment. The first result spread the gospel all over the Roman Empire--a number of the Praetorian guard came to Christ. The second result impacted the Christians of Rome.

In Rome the church lived their Christianity with caution and care. They would take no chances; they shirked from sharing their faith. Yet they were already ready to say "we told you so." Their insecurities were obvious.

"and most of the brethren in the Lord, having become confident by my chains"

The phrase "having become confident" means to "receive confidence." Paul's testimony impacted them so powerfully that they derived confidence from it.

"are much more bold"

Boldness in Rome took some courage. A person could risk imprisonment or even death. There was open season on Christians. This issued a timid and mousy witness. They were not sure of themselves. They were afraid of what might happen if they ran afoul of Roman authority.

Christians today often are mousy and afraid to share their faith with far less consequence than the Romans. We are apologetic and quiet about our faith. We are afraid to hurt feelings. We do not

want to speak up so that the issues are clear--heaven and hell.

The word "are" is continual action in the Greek. Their boldness became a pattern. Previously Paul had written to the Romans "that your faith is spoken of throughout the whole world" (Rom. 1:8). Evidently they did witness previously but it had become intermittent and anemic. They were cautious because they were afraid. But here they established a pattern of "much more" boldness.

To be bold is one thing. To be more bold is another. Yet, to be much more bold is another. Paul's testimony had a mighty impact on advancing the gospel among Christians!

Why were they bold? Because they "received confidence" from Paul's witness in prison. They saw that he was always on the move when it came to sharing his faith. He had another ministry in prison. We often are quick to find excuses for not sharing our faith; Paul was alert to every opportunity.

"to speak the word without fear"

Fear disappeared from their witness. The prayer of the church shortly after it began was "grant to Your servants that with all boldness they may speak Your word" (Acts 4:29).

One of the least common denominator in witnessing is boldness. If we are not confident of what we are sharing we are dead in the water before we begin. People will know that we do not believe what we are saying.

PRINCIPLE: Confidence vanquishes fear. Paul's great model of sharing his faith under adversity and winning some of the Praetorian guard to Christ encouraged Christians to share their faith.

APPLICATION: Are we a witness to Christians? Do we model the dynamics of witnessing for our faith?

Philippians 1:15

"Some indeed preach Christ even from envy and strife, and some also from goodwill"

In Prison Paul had two sorts of opposition, both from without and from within. Antagonism from without came from Roman authorities. Animosity from within came from the church! And this from

a church that Paul said their "faith was spoken of throughout the world."

Beginning at verse 15 and running through verse 17 Paul catalogues incentives for preaching the gospel. Their message was the same (thank God!) but their motive was different.

"Some indeed preach Christ"

They all preached Christ. They were not preaching Moses or Abraham. They were outstanding men of God but they were not Christ. Jesus was more than a man, he was the "great God and Saviour" (Tit. 2:13). He stands like a majestic skyscraper over a shack.

"even from envy and strife"

"Envy and strife"--what a blend of motives with which to preach! The word "from" means "because of" (motives). The message was fine but the motive was something else!

Envy is the feeling of disapproval by hearing the successes of others. This term is always used in the negative or evil sense in the New Testament. Some preachers in Rome evidently resented Paul's success in ministry.

It takes maturity to rejoice in the success of others. Immaturity constantly compares self with others. Juvenile Christians are intimidated by the accomplishments of others.

Envy not only means to desire to have what someone else has but to seek to deprive another person of what they have. In other words, in some way envy seeks to diminish the accomplishments of others. If a church in town is blessed with significant growth, another church may say "all they are concerned about is numbers." Envy never builds up; it always lessens the person who exercises it. "Envy is rotteness to the bones" (Prov 14:3); envy will rot the core of our person.

When people feel diminished by the success of others there is a corollary that always comes with this--strife. Strife is an expression of enmity. These two evils are stitched together in James 3:16, "For where envy and self-seeking (strife) exist, confusion and every evil thing are there." People try to outdo and eclipse others where there is envy in motivation.

Churches are often neutralized because of this deadly combination. Think of a church full of people threatened by everybody else. Strife is inevitable.

"and some also from good will"

"Good will" means a kind purpose. Thank God some in the church at Rome had good motives. The word "from" here means "because of" as well. These people did not have a twisted sense of ill will at Paul's achievements.

PRINCIPLE: Motivation is crucial because if false motivation drives us it distorts our maturity.

APPLICATION: Paul had no bed of roses in Rome. Small jealousies tried to undermine him. Paul stood independent from these hurts. He did not retaliate with distortions of his own. Are immature motivations distorting your soul and keeping you from being what God wants you to be? Is your motivation to gain approbation from others? In your ministry do you try to impress?

Philippians 1:16

"The former preach Christ from selfish ambition, not sincerely, supposing to add affliction to my chains"

Verse 15 marked three motives for preaching the gospel. Verse 16 assigns three more negative motives.

"The former preach Christ from selfish ambition"

Christ is preached but from the motive of "selfish ambition." These words in the Greek originally meant a person who works for hire. To many, to work for hire was demeaning since he worked for his own interests. Instead of working for the good of the group this person worked for himself. Also, it was used in a political sense; it had the idea of party-making. It denotes pursuing political office by unfair means. This person would plot and scheme to reach his ends. Intrigue was the name of the game.

This is a person who is out for his personal approbation. He operates on power lust. This motivation causes strife, contention and discord. It is an expression of enmity. It is the desire to fight back.

They had the spirit of rivalry; they had an argumentative spirit.

"not sincerely"

"Sincerely" means "pure," in this context, pure intentions. To not to be pure is to blend something impure with something pure. They had a pure message but added something impure to it. It is an arresting idea that God can bless the gospel preached from impure motives. Later, Paul says that he rejoiced that the gospel was preached by these people (v.18).

When we give the message of Jesus Christ with impure motives it is like mixing gas and water. To put a gallon of gas into the tank of your car is one thing, to put a gallon of water into it as well is another. To preach the gospel is one thing; to preach the gospel with impure motives is another. Impure motives have been placed into the pure gospel. This dilutes the gospel to some extent. It distorts its power because what is preached does not line up with the way it is preached.

"supposing to add affliction to my chains"

The reason they were preaching Christ from "selfish ambition" and impure motives was that they wanted to add to Paul's affliction in jail! They wanted to rub salt into his wounds.

Possibly, they would come to Paul in jail and brag about the numbers of people who were coming to Christ in their ministry. Maybe they would even leave the impression that he was in jail because something was wrong with his life. They were spiritual; he was carnal.

They would watch to see if he turned green with envy. But they did not know the caliber of his soul. Paul was not jealous, in fact, he thanked God that the gospel was preached (v.18).

PRINCIPLE: Some people do not preach the gospel with pure motives; they are malicious with their message. Recipients of this malice need to be people with a caliber of soul.

APPLICATION: Do you put yourself at the mercy of malice? Are you independent from people who try to hurt you?

Philippians 1:17

"But the latter out of love, knowing that I am appointed for the defense of the gospel."

In verses 15 and 16 Paul's lists both proper and improper motives. In verse 17 Paul sets forth another proper motive--"but the latter out of love."

Paul has just made the point that some Christian workers in Rome were seeking to rub salt into his wounds (his prison experience) by bragging about their successes in ministry. They were envious about the way the Praetorian Guard responded to Paul.

"but the latter out of love"

Love is the second valid motive. The first good motive was "good will" of verse 15. Love is an advance on good will.

"Of" in "of love" is source. Love is the source (motive) for what they do. Wolf packs turn on their own when one falls in the fray. Christians often shoot their wounded as well.

"Though I speak with the tongues of men and of angels, but have not love, I have become sounding brass or a clanging cymbal" (I Co. 13:1). Preaching without love is just a lot of noise. Preaching like that is just sound and fury but without integrity.

"knowing that I am appointed for the defense of the gospel."

Paul saw his purpose as defending the gospel. Note the emphasis upon the gospel in this chapter:

- "fellowship in the gospel" (v.5)

- "confirmation of the gospel" (v.7)

- "furtherance of the gospel" (v.12)

- "defense of the gospel" (here)

Paul was greatly exercised about advancing the gospel. Paul viewed himself as "appointed" for the gospel. He knew his mission. He saw himself clearly in God's plan of world evangelism.

PRINCIPLE: The reason some Romans loved Paul was that they knew God had appointed him to advance the gospel. Love found its source in viewing things from God's perspective.

APPLICATION: Is love more than maudlin sentimentalism to you? Does your love find its source in God's viewpoint. Does your love have content? Are you in love with people who are advancing the gospel? How are you expressing that love?

Philippians 1:18

"What then? Only that in every way, whether in pretense or in truth,

Christ is preached; and in this I rejoice, yes, and will rejoice."

Verse 18 is the conclusion to the paragraph dealing with motives. Two more motives are treated: "pretense" and "truth."

"What then?"

A conclusion is drawn. We would say, "so what?"

"only that in every way"

Paul did not care much about form or methods. His heart was to elevate the gospel. Paul did not concern himself even with motives as long as Christ was preached. God can even use carnality to advance the gospel, as here--"pretense."

"whether in pretense or in truth Christ is preached"

"Pretense" means to cover the real motive and present others with a false idea. This is an attempt to disguise true motives. They used Christ as a cover for their lust for power and "selfish ambition."

Paul did not condone their cunning. However, he did approve of their preaching Christ. Notwithstanding their motive, they were preaching the gospel. He had a single eye for his purpose (appointed) on earth. Salvation of souls were more important to him than some perceived rivalry with him.

"Truth" is to preach without false motivation in this context. What you see is what you get. A person whose motive and message are the same is a person with integrity. This is a person with no ulterior motives.

"and in this I rejoice, yes, and will rejoice"

"I rejoice" is present tense. "While I sit in jail I am rejoicing over the fact that Christ is preached." "Will rejoice" indicates his purpose to continue to rejoice no matter what may come his way.

Paul's point is that the people who were trying to hurt him were contributing to his joy! Paul had such deep appreciation for the work of Jesus Christ upon the cross nothing could alter his fo-

cus. Christ's death upon the cross, his resurrection, ascension, and glorification were so dominant in this thinking that nothing tawdry daunted him.

PRINCIPLE: God turns cursing into blessing. Paul's foes were out to compete with him, to diminish him. Instead, he was blessed.

APPLICATION: Are the people who are attempting to make your life miserable succeeding? Are they controlling your happiness or unhappiness? Is it possible for you to be independent from your antagonists? Paul was. Paul did not concern himself with their motives. That is why cursing was turned into blessing in his life.

Philippians 1:19

"For I know that this will turn out for my deliverance through your prayer and the supply of the spirit of Jesus Christ"

Now Paul turns to the subject of his attitude toward imprisonment and death. He viewed everything from the viewpoint of his purpose on earth from God's Word. That gave him stability and strength. A person who is stable has courage and confidence.

Paul is about to face trial. If he is found guilty he will face death. Yet in the face of such ominous circumstances he is calm. Verse 19 gives three reasons for Paul's confidence for his deliverance from prison.

"for I know that this will turn out for my deliverance"

The "this" refers to the preceding section, "Christ is preached." "Deliverance" means, in this context, deliverance from prison, not the salvation of the soul. The preaching of the gospel with new intensity both by him and the Romans will contribute to his release from prison. This is the best way to conquer social problems--win people to Christ.

"through your prayer"

This is the second reason for Paul's confidence that he will be released from prison.

Prayer from the Philippian church is one thing upon which Paul could rest. Can our Christian leaders count on us to pray for them? If you are a leader, can you lean on the prayers of people in your organization? Do people think enough of

you to pray for you? It is a wonderful thing to trust people enough to pray for us.

It was obvious that the Philippians loved Paul. They cared enough for him to send Epaphroditus over hundreds of hazardous miles. He almost lost his life in the process.

"and the supply of the spirit of Jesus Christ"

This is the third reason why Paul felt he would be delivered from prison. The "supply of the Spirit" means the Holy Spirit. This is a functional title for the Holy Spirit (what he does). The Holy Spirit will move providentially upon the authorities in Rome so that they will be disposed to release him.

The word "supply" was used for a wealthy person who bore the expenses of a city-state drama choir. These productions were very expensive. It took someone very wealthy to pick up the tab. God, who is incalculably wealthy, provided the "supply" of the Spirit so that Paul could continue living.

PRINCIPLE: Paul was a person of confidence because he placed that confidence is something solid--

truth.

APPLICATION: Do you place your confidence in truth? Adversity is where we find whether we have that confidence in God's truth. Having poise in setbacks has its root in God's Word.

Philippians 1:20

"According to my earnest expectation and hope that in nothing I shall be ashamed, but with all boldness, as always, so now also Christ will

be magnified in my body, whether by life or by death."

In verse 20 Paul reveals how he establishes his poise and bearing in hardship.

"according to my earnest expectation and hope"

"According to" means according to norms. This is a norm by which he lives. This is his spiritual aspiration.

"Earnest expectation" is an intense compound term of three words in the Greek: away from, head, look. Literally it means to stretch the head away from the body to look; the head bent for-

ward to see something; a looking away towards something. It is an intense term for concentration. It means to anticipate by watching very carefully for something.

This word is used for a sentry watching in the dark. He strains to see the enemy. He is waiting to see the slightest movement.

What is Paul intensely concentrating upon? He wants to magnify Christ in his life. He is ardent when it comes to that. This is the focus of his whole being. He is attentive to anything that even slightly reflects poorly upon the Lord Jesus.

Very few people have the ability to focus and concentrate for long periods of time. One major reason why we do poorly in our jobs, school and other enterprises is lack of concentration. A quality Christian life takes concentration. A football player who does not listen to the play in the huddle will break up the play. A Christian who does not focus upon orienting every aspect of his life to Christ will live with short-term, short-sighted and limited ends in view.

"Hope" in the Greek means more than "wish." It carries the idea of confidence in the ultimate outcome. Paul is taking a look at his entire life to the very end. At the end of his life he does not want to be ashamed of how his life reflected upon the Lord Jesus. He did not want to have any regrets at the end of his life. Up to this point he had no regrets. Now he wants to finish strongly.

PRINCIPLE: Paul lived his life with an ultimate regulative life principle.

APPLICATION: The focus of many Christians is pleasure, sensual indulgence, money, selfishness, power, flattery. People who live like this simply mark segments of time. They live with no ultimate orientation in view. We need to live with eternal values in view.

The first phrase of verse 20 indicates Paul lived his life with the future in mind. At the end of his life he wanted to look back and say that he lived his life to the glory of God. He had a suspicion about himself, however, a vulnerable kink in his armor which might diminish his passion. He knew that

he had a temptation to be ashamed of Christ and the gospel.

"that in nothing I shall be ashamed"

Paul is looking at shame from the viewpoint of the rest of his life. He is evaluating the future. He does not want to waste his time losing opportunities because of shame. He wants to finish strong.

No matter how many times we have failed in the past, we should not look back with regret, focus on the past. We should use our lives at the moment to set a platform for the future. We may be permeated with regrets: "I should have studied more in college and I would not be such a flop right now;" "If only I would have been more faithful to that relationship;" "I have failed as a person and I have failed as a Christian." This thinking is futile. The past is the past, it cannot change. We can change the future, however. There is our hope. Our lives can have purpose and definition if we look at our "expectation and hope."

"but with all boldness, as always"

"Boldness" is the antithesis to "shame." Boldness means to speak your mind, a frankness of speaking which amounts to an intrepid communication, fearless candor. Paul had fearless candor when it came to sharing his faith. "As always" indicates this was his pattern. He never had to regret not sharing his faith with forthrightness. He maintained that openness throughout his life. Years earlier he said, "For I am not ashamed of the gospel of Christ, for it is the power of God to salvation for everyone who believes, for the Jew first and also for the Greek" (Rom. 1:16). Remember verse 14, "much more bold to speak the word without fear."

We fail to witness not only because of fear but because of shame. "Therefore do not be ashamed of the testimony of our Lord..." (II Tim. 1:8). If we stand foursquare without apology, God will use us. Like Paul in jail we need to go out on a limb and risk our "reputation" as a Christian.

PRINCIPLE: Our focus should be future oriented, not past. That future should have goal orientation: a vulnerability with fearless candor about the one we love.

APPLICATION: Is your life tepid or intrepid? Are you willing to orient your life around sharing Christ with fearless candor?

The passion that exercised the great apostle Paul most was that Christ would be made big in his life.

"so now also:

Now when he is in prison he wants Christ to be magnified in his body.

"Christ will be magnified in my body,"

In verse 18 says, "Christ is preached" but this verse is an advance on that, "Christ will be magnified." Christ preached has to do with words; Christ magnified has to do with works. It is not a question of either/or but of both/and. We can get out of balance either way. We can speak the gospel but not live the gospel; we can live the gospel but not speak the gospel.

The word "magnified" means to make great, enlarge, praise. We get our English word "megaphone" from this word. A megaphone makes your voice big. A magnifying glass makes print big. We are to make Jesus big with our lives and lips!

The Greek in the word "magnified" means that Christ receives magnification by our actions. There are two types of magnification: microscope and telescope. The microscope makes the little seem big. That is not the picture here. The telescope makes the actually big loom big. Our task as Christians is to bring the proportions of who Jesus truly is to the fore.

Mary used this word when she said, "My soul magnifies the Lord, and my spirit has rejoiced in God my Saviour" (Lk 1:46,17). It is easier to magnify the Lord in your soul than in your body. No one sees your soul but people can see your body. Paul wanted Christ to be magnified in his "body." The soul and spirit shines through the body (i.e., what the body does).

"Foods for the stomach and the stomach for foods, but God will destroy both it and them. Now the body is not for sexual immorality but for the Lord, and the Lord for the body" (I Co. 6:13). God is concerned with the body as well as the soul. We should exercise care for the body as well as the soul. If we change oil and tune the engine but do not wash or wax the exterior of our automobile that is imbalance. If we wash and wax the car but do not care for the motor that is distortion. If we

care for our body but not our soul, that will warp our spirituality. If we nurture our soul but do not tend to our body activities that will distort our testimony. Jesus should be magnified in spirit, soul and body. "For you were bought at a price; therefore glorify God in your body and in your spirit, which are God's" (I Co. 6:20).

"whether by life or by death."

Here are two alternatives. If Paul should die at the hands of an executioner, he wants to make Jesus big in that situation. If Paul should continue to live, he wants to make Jesus grand to everyone he meets.

PRINCIPLE: God's purpose for the believer is to make what is truly magnificent about the Lord Jesus loom magnificent.

APPLICATION: Do you want your body to be a magnifying glass for the Lord Jesus? Do you want to make him big to the world? Not life-size but King-size. If we magnify Jesus people will be attracted to him and embrace him as their Saviour. Folks will sit up and take notice of him. By this we will enhance the world's estimation of the Lord.

Philippians 1:21

"For to me, to live is Christ, and to die is gain."

What do you think about when you think of the future? Do you think of your children or grandchildren, your health, job or retirement? Are spiritual aspirations a part of the future for you?

Verse 21 amplifies verse 20. In verse 20 Paul stated his spiritual aspiration was to make Christ big in his body. Now he sets forth the alternatives in which he will do that.

Here is a man who did not have much future although he was confident that he was going to be released from prison. Paul is looking at his options. He had two basic options: what would he do with his life if he lived or died? In this verse Paul answers that question for himself. He wanted his body to be a showcase in either option.

"for to me, to live is Christ"

"To me" indicates Paul's personal testimony. He is not speaking for anyone else, not Peter or John. I will define what life and death are to me.

Note that both verbs ("is") are in italics. That means that they were supplied by the translators. Here then is the literal idea: "to live... Christ." Or to put it in a formula "to live=Christ." To live equals Christ. Living for Christ was his ambition. As long as Paul continued to live he would live for the purpose of glorifying Christ.

It is also true that the dynamic that produces a spiritual life is Christ himself--"When Christ who is our life" (Col. 3:4). Christ our life. The Christian life is Christ moving into the believer, invading them so that his life is lived through them. This is far more than imitating Jesus. That would be too difficult with a sinful heart. "Christ lives in me" (Gal. 2:20). He is more willing to live his life through us than we are willing to allow him.

"Always carrying about in the body the dying of the Lord Jesus, that the life of Jesus also may be manifested in our body" (II Co. 4:10). We need to think of our body as an exhibit to demonstrate Jesus. There are automobile exhibitions where they reveal the latest models. These cars are presented in their most appealing context. The believer is to present Christ in the most appealing setting. "To reveal his Son in me" (Gal. 1:16).

PRINCIPLE: For Paul, the Christian life was not a hobby; it was his very life. This is what should be normal Christian living. With most of us our Christian life is subnormal.

APPLICATION: What would you put in place of "Christ"? For me to live is _____.

Some might insert "my wife. I worship the ground she walks on." Others my say, "my children. I will sacrifice anything for them." Yet some may say, "my job. I love my work. I love business."

Why not place Christ in the center of our lives?

In Philippians 1:21 Paul not only defines what life is to him but he also defines what death is to him.

In the first part of the verse Paul says that the ruling principle of his life is to live in fellowship with Christ. For him, the ruling-principle was not money, fame or pleasure. Life was synonymous with Christ. He could not conceive of living without fellowship with the Lord. He was gloriously alive by pervading everything with Christ.

"and to die is gain."

For Paul, life was a wonderful fellowship with the Lord Jesus, but death was a prospect for even more intimate fellowship with him.

Not only should we have a philosophy of life but we should have a philosophy of death. If we do, we have a win-win situation. If we live, we win; if we die, we win. Now Paul gives his philosophy of death.

The word "gain" means profit or advantage. It was used for monetary profit, to make money. "Gain" was also used in the sense of "to win something." Death was a win for Paul. To die-- success; to die-- a win.

Notice again there is no verb because "is" is italicized in "to die is gain." This put great emphasis in the Greek on the word "gain." Paul is shouting that death is a gain for a person who will meet Jesus face to face.

"To die is gain" is a productive sequence to "to live is Christ." If Christ is everything that makes life worthwhile then meeting him in death will even be a more valuable experience yet. It will make him more alive. Death removes the veil of knowing Jesus from afar to meeting him face to face. Death will usher us into his very presence. Death, therefore, should be computed as a friend.

For many, death is an enemy. It is destructive and a great loss. For the person who anticipates meeting Jesus face to face it is a "gain." If we are consumed with money as the object of our lives death would have to be placed on the debit side of our assessments. Death plunges us into a pathetic end. For Paul, death was not a dark, bleak termination of the dynamics of life but the beginning of even a greater life.

PRINCIPLE: Do you have a philosophy of death? Death is a win because we will be more alive than we are now. We received "eternal life" at the moment of salvation. Death will release the shackles that keep us from full fellowship with the Lord.

APPLICATION: Every believer will be successful one day when he/she meets the Lord Jesus. Are you looking forward to this success? "To be absent from the body is to be face to face with the Lord Jesus" (II Co. 5:8). Are you looking forward to this eternal "win"?

Philippians 1:22

"But if I live on in the flesh, this will mean fruit from my labor; yet what I shall choose I cannot tell"

In verse 21 Paul gave his outlook on life and also his outlook on death. He had a wonderful viewpoint on both. He had a win-win view of both life and death. If he lives, he lives for Christ. If he dies, he will meet Jesus face to face. Jesus not only changes your outlook on life he changes your outlook on death.

We look for to death with anticipation (not masochism). Only those who have come to Christ and are looking to see him again have such an outlook on death.

In verses 22-24 he gives his assessment of which of these two alternatives is more important.

"But if I live on in the flesh, this will mean fruit from my labor"

Now Paul looks at the alternative of his continuing to live physically. "Live on in the flesh" means to continue to live in the body. This is the first part of verse 21, "For to me to live is Christ."

Very few Christians could say "my life is living for Christ." That was his definition of life. With most of us Christian is just a hobby. It merely occupies the fringe area of our spare time. We will not let our Christianity interfere with our life! We practice Christianity on Sunday morning but make it marginal the rest of the week. We use church like a religious country club. It is fun to be there once in awhile.

"Yet what I shall choose I cannot tell"

Paul is in a quandary. If he lives, he wins; if he dies, he wins. This is a quandary between two wins! It is like someone giving you a BMW or a Mercedes. The choice is up to you.

The two alternatives are whether he should continue his work in time or see Jesus in eternity. A person who is not deeply in love with the Lord Jesus would view "to die is gain" as odd. But a reflection of the quality of our spiritual life is how we anticipate eternity. There is probably a correlation between how we live for Christ and our anticipation of eternity. On a descending scale, if we

do not live for Christ, meeting him in eternity is of little value either. Living and dying in Christian values are linked together.

Dying will be gain to those who do not live for Christ but they will not be able to appreciate it until eternity. Faith enables us to participate in the future.

PRINCIPLE: A spiritual Christian with the right sense of expectancy always faces a quandary between two positive alternatives.

APPLICATION: Do you fear death? We always fear the things we do not know. We have not experienced death, therefore, we fear it. The more real Jesus is to us in time the less fear we will have of eternity. If we know Jesus in time, knowing him in eternity is just an extension of fellowship with him.

Philippians 1:23

"For I am hard pressed between the two, having a desire to depart and be with Christ, which is far better."

Paul is on the horns of a dilemma. He has a desire to be with Christ in eternity which is the better of the two options. He also has a desire to continue to have an effective ministry in time. In this verse he gives the first side of the dilemma.

"for I am hard pressed between the two"

Paul is in a squeeze. He is pressured in his mind. His is pressure of two (v. 21) excellent options: to have full fellowship with the Lord Jesus and to have a productive ministry.

He perceives death from two viewpoints: 1) a departing 2) being with Christ.

"having a desire to depart"

The word "depart" is used as a nautical term--a loosing of the anchor prior to setting sail. A term with the same root is used in II Timothy 4:6, "...the time of my departure is at hand" (his death was imminent). Death is an embarking upon a voyage; it is to leave the body. So death is more than leaving this life it is a separation from the body, "I have a desire to leave this body."

The soul and spirit do not remain in the body at death. They leave the body. When a Christian goes to a grave side service, he only takes the "remains"

of his loved one. His loved one is not there; he has loosed the anchor of his soul and departed into the presence of the Lord Jesus.

"and be with Christ"

This is the second description of death. It is one thing to visit a friend, it is another to live with him permanently. It is one thing to fellowship with the Lord Jesus, it is another to fellowship with him perpetually! Heaven is to be with Christ.

That was Paul's "desire" (yearning, longing). He wanted to be "in conjunction with" Christ. cf. 3:10.

"which is far better."

It is far better for a Christian to die than to live, although few of us believe it. In this verse Paul says that the "gain" of verse 21 "to die is gain" is "far better," not just "better" but "far better."

To be absent from the body for the believer is "to be present with the Lord," not present with the worms in the grave! It is better because the soul departs the body at death and goes into the presence of the Lord.

PRINCIPLE: Death for the Christian is no bleak, black, terminus of existence; it is a separation from the physical body and an entrance into fellowship with Jesus Christ.

APPLICATION: Do you look upon death with dread or as a "departure" from planet earth into the presence of the Lord Jesus?

Philippians 1:24

"Nevertheless to remain in the flesh is more needful for you."

The second half of Paul's dilemma is verse 24. The first part of his dilemma was to go to be with

Christ. "Where Jesus is 'tis heaven there.

Verse 24 deals with the first half of verse 21, "to live is Christ."

"Nevertheless"

This is the contrast to verse 23, "to depart and be with Christ."

"to remain in the flesh"

This means to continue to live physically. A corollary verse is II Corinthians 5:6, "... while we are at home in the body we are absent from him."

There are other verses which indicate death is a separation of the soul from the body. When Rachel was dying, it was said "her soul was departing (for she died)" (Gen. 35:18). Elijah prayed to raise a young boy from the dead, "'let this child's soul come back to him,' Then the LORD heard the voice of Elijah; and the soul of the child came back to him, and he revived" (I Kg. 17:21,22).

"is more needful for you."

"For me to go to be with the Lord Jesus is good for me, but not for you. You people in Philippi would not benefit from my ministry." There is no Scriptural evidence that any believer in heaven can help us down here. Their only help they can give is while they are here in time on earth.

The word "needful" simply means "necessary." There is a need for our being alive at this time on earth.

PRINCIPLE: As long as we are alive on earth, God has a purpose for our being here.

APPLICATION: Why does God have you here on earth?

Philippians 1:25

"And being confident of this, I know that I shall remain and continue with you all for your progress and joy of faith."

Here is the reason God had Paul upon earth. Paul had no mere desire to dangle around on the frayed edges of existence. It is not enough just to live a long time. Purpose gives life meaning and definition.

The Philippians needed him more than he needed to go to heaven at this time in his life.

"and being confident of this"

Paul was confident of his upcoming acquittal. Confidence serves our orientation to life. Confidence that God has a need for us places boundaries around what we do; it gives meaning to our existence.

"I know that I shall remain and continue with you all"

He is going to continue to live. The Roman authorities will not put him to death; he will be delivered from prison.

"for your progress"

"Progress" means to go forward, advance. It is the same word used in II Timothy 4:15, Meditate on these things; give yourself entirely to them, that your progress may be evident to all." We need to develop towards maturity in our faith. This is the "progress of faith."

Some believers are baby Christians. A baby's mind and body have not developed yet. A new or static believer remains at a low level of development. Others are adolescent believers. They are half child, half adult. They have not reached a point of independence. They still need their parents but they are resentful toward the authority of their parents. The adult or mature believer is a Christian who does not depend on others to appropriate the principles of the Word to their experience. He does have an interdependence with others, however.

"and joy of faith"

As faith progresses joy escalates. Many of us endure Christianity. There is little excitement anymore. We have lost our first love. We need revival. We need to be awoken.

"Joy" means to be animated about something you believe in. This is a word of enthusiasm. When we brag about self that is boasting in the un-Biblical sense. But enthusiasm about the Lord Jesus and what he did on the cross is the point here. Christians who are animated about their faith can be very expressive. They love to talk about their favorite subject. Some people are dull until you talk hockey and then they come alive.

PRINCIPLE: One purpose for our existence upon earth is to be animated about both the maturity and joy of the faith of others.

APPLICATION: What are you doing to advance the faith of others?

Philippians 1:26

"That your rejoicing for me may be more abundant in Jesus Christ by my coming to you again."

In verse 25 Paul was confident that he would be released from jail so that the Philippians would continue to progress in joy in their faith. Here, he finishes the thought.

"That your rejoicing for me may be more abundant in Jesus Christ"

Paul picks up the word "joy" from verse 25. If there is "progress" "and joy" (v25) in the faith there will be "more abundant" rejoicing.

Often we find ourselves in situations where we cannot rejoice. The Word of God never says we are to rejoice in our circumstances nor under them. The focus of our joy is Jesus Christ. "Rejoice in the Lord always. Again I will say, rejoice!" (4:4).

We can rejoice "in Jesus Christ" because he is always the same, "Jesus Christ the same yesterday, today, and for ever" (Heb. 13:8). We can always count on him. That is why we are enthusiastic about him.

"by my coming to you again"

There was a spiritual bond between Paul and the Philippians. That kind of bond was not found with all the churches to which he ministered. In Corinth he was the target of much criticism even though he had an effective ministry there. There is a great difference in churches.

There are some churches that are friendly. Others are outreach oriented. Some are a religious country club caring only for their own interests. Some are receptive to the Word of God and have a great hunger to be taught; others veto any serious teaching of the Bible. Paul knew the Philippians would rejoice in his ministry of the Word to them.

PRINCIPLE: Biblical joy is independent from circumstances; it is focused on a person who never changes.

APPLICATION: Are you trying to get all your ducks in order? Are you hoping to manage your life so that there are no more problems? That very desire will set us up for failure because circumstances will go bad at some point. The only one who will always be there for us is Jesus Christ.

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"

Now Paul turns to an exhortation. This challenge to the Philippians runs from verse 27 to verse 30. It is a plea to match our life with our belief.

"Only let your conduct be worthy of the gospel of Christ"

The word "conduct" is a political term. It is the Greek term *politeuo* from which we get the word politics. The word means in this context "to govern," to be a free citizen and live as such; to conduct oneself according to the laws and customs of a state. Generally, it means to live or order one's life and conduct. This is duty to a group or body of people.

To live as a citizen in the Roman Empire in that day was something extraordinary. A Roman citizen carried far-reaching rights. Philippi was a Roman colony. The Philippians understood this term clearly. The style of life of the Roman citizen was much different than other people. Our conduct, manner of life, deportment should reflect on the gospel style of life.

"Be worthy" means deservedly, of equal value. It connotes of like value, worth as much. Our conduct should match our gospel. Is our life becoming to the gospel? Does it reflect on the greatness of the Lord Jesus? If we try on a new dress we ask the question, "is this becoming to me?" Is my life becoming to the gospel? Does my life do anything for the gospel? Does the gospel fit my life style?

There are some things which may not be sinful or evil but they do not reflect positively on the gospel. It is incongruous or inconsistent with the gospel. It does not mix with the gospel.

PRINCIPLE: Our life should match the gospel.

APPLICATION: Our conduct should reflect positively to a lost world. We should conduct our lives like citizens of heaven rather than hell. We have a heavenly origin and destiny. We are to live heavenly lives on earth representing the Sovereign King Jesus. Does our life correspond to the gospel?

In the first phrase Paul made the point that there is a correlation between the gospel and how we live. Now he amplifies that point.

"So that whether I come and see you or am absent, I may hear of your affairs"

In verse 26 Paul said that he expects to be released from jail and come to see them. "Or am absent," he is not sure he is going to be released from jail.

In any case he wanted to hear about the spiritual dynamic of the congregation. He wanted to know how they were getting along.

"that you stand fast in one spirit"

This is the first thing he wanted to hear, he longed to hear of stability in their relationships. This same word crops up again in 4:1, "... so stand fast in the Lord." In that context Paul is talking about division caused by Euodia and Syntyche.

No ministry can go forward without stability in relationships. They needed to hold the ground of harmony in their fellowship. They were to stand fast like the famous Macedonian phalanx.

The theme of human relationships crops up over and over throughout the epistle. This is a problem in churches and Christian organizations today. Many Christians act as if they have no mutual relationship or responsibilities within the body of Christ. But as a colony of heaven, we do.

"One spirit" means to fuse and blend a unity of spirit. It is our "spirit" which gives us a disposition toward unity. The church of Jesus Christ will be weakened by internal rivalries and discontent.

"with one mind striving together for the faith of the gospel"

If believers are of one mind they can further the cause of Christ. If a church is of many minds about the direction of the ministry the power of the ministry will diffuse. The fuse to light the dynamite of the gospel will go out.

"Striving together" is drawn from the Roman amphitheater. It was used for captives in combat fighting for their lives. This would be called a strategic front in war. The believer is in combat against divisive forces. Keeping the unity of the church is a gladiatorial struggle. It means the life or death of the church.

We must be united to "strive together" for the faith of the gospel. To fight side by side, trust and cooperation is important. To fight together for the "faith of the gospel" is foundational for an aggressive church.

PRINCIPLE: The believer is to stand his ground as a champion for unity because it is a basis for advancing the gospel. The gospel is at stake.

APPLICATION: A strategy of the Devil is divide and conquer. Churches are rendered ineffective because of the failure of Christians to get along. Are you part of a schism whether in a small or large group? Are you fighting side by side with others to further the gospel?

Philippians 1:28

"And not in any way terrified by your adversaries, which is to them a proof of perdition, but to you of salvation, and that from God"

Many Christians panic under pressure. It does not take much for some people to cave in to adversity. This verse addresses how to orient when we are under duress.

Verse 27 exhibited the need to match our life with lip, our behavior with our testimony. But that is going to come with a price. When we share Christ, adversity will come.

"and not in any way terrified by your adversaries"

The word "terrified" means to be frightened started like a surprised bird. Some Christians "flutter" at the first opposition to their testimony. They shy at every shadow. This is panic and panic is a rout. This is the worst kind of defeat. Christian forces disperse at the first person who says, "Boo!" If a Christian can be intimidated his testimony will be neutralized.

"Not in any way" means that there should be no circumstance that should disorient the believer from his course. We should never hit the panic button. A believer should never become disoriented.

"which is to them a proof of perdition"

"Proof" is a sign, a testimony, a declaration. Their courageousness is a double symbol:

1. to their adversaries a sign of destruction.
2. to their fellow believers a sign of salvation.

If nonbelievers cannot shake you from your testimony it shows them that they are on the wrong road. They can take your house, bank account, business but you are unshakable. They can see that the "game is up."

However, this proof does not come from you but "that from God" (last phrase). Those without Christ see their own doom in you. The world is not interested in an anemic, spineless Christianity. They are impacted by courageous Christians.

"but to you of salvation"

Sharing our testimony with courage is a "token, sign, proof" of our salvation. It symbolizes the reality of it. One reason some Christians do not experience the reality of their faith is that they never put their faith on the line. Our faith will prove itself to us when we use it with courage.

"and that from God."

The proof to Christians of the reality of their faith also comes "from God." It is God who gives that proof. It is by his order or plan. God is interested in his cause so he actively gets involved in your testimony.

PRINCIPLE: Our testimony is a much more powerful thing than most Christians realize because God works through it. Therefore, it is powerful.

APPLICATION: When you share your faith, do you panic or trust God to use your testimony?

Philippians 1:29

"For to you it has been granted on behalf of Christ, not only to believe in him, but also to suffer for his sake."

There is an attitude amongst Christians that somehow they are supposed to be exempt from suffering. This passage says God has designed suffering in the life of the believer so that he/she will represent Jesus Christ in it.

Verse 28 indicated that when we share our faith people will "stand against" us (literal meaning of "adversaries"). Christian will face opposition when they share their faith.

This verse contains a double gift: 1. to believe in Christ 2. to suffer for his sake.

"for to you it has been granted on behalf of Christ"

Suffering is a gift from God. The phrase "been granted" in the Greek means that the believer receives suffering as a gift from God. The word "granted" means "to give freely or graciously as a favor." We have been granted the privilege of suffering for Christ. The suffering of the believer is under God's sovereign control. This is no accident. Neither is it a sign of God's punishment.

Suffering with a purpose is a privilege. Suffering in itself is no privilege but suffering for Christ is.

"On the behalf of Christ" displays the pinnacle purpose for suffering. Note the phrase later in the verse "for his sake." This is what makes suffering valuable. Suffering points people to Christ. If we have Christ and his great glory as the purpose for our lives, it gives everything definition in our lives.

"not only to believe in Him."

Our ability to believe on Christ is a gift from God; suffering is a gift from God as well. Our salvation is dependent upon the finished work of Christ upon the cross. We contribute nothing to salvation but trust in what has been given.

"but also to suffer for His sake."

Some people will not face the claims of Christ until they see how a Christian faces deep anguish. A believer under immense adversity and simultaneously possessing an inner orientation will impact those without Christ. How many times have we seen people come to Christ at the death of a dynamic witness for Christ.

Nothing is valuable in life until Christ is its aim. Suffering is never an end in itself. Pain is not good. But the association of that pain makes it purposeful.

PRINCIPLE: Everything that the believer has of spiritual value is a donation from God, even affliction.

APPLICATION: Do we accept suffering as a gift from God's hand? It is conventional for us to think of salvation as a gift but do we think of suffering for Christ as a gift? Can we accept the first gift

(salvation) and not the second (suffering)? We are citizens of heaven, therefore, we are living out of a suitcase down here. We should not treat life on earth as the ultimate goal of our lives. We are spiritual aliens; this world is not our home. We should expect opposition.

Philippians 1:30

"Having the same conflict which you saw in me and now hear is in me."

Having stated in verse 29 that affliction is in God's design, Paul now uses himself as an example of how to suffer.

"having the same conflict"

"Conflict" is an athletic term. It means "contest, agony." It was originally used for gladiators in competition. It denotes any contest or struggle. We get our English term "agony" from this word. The Christian life is a struggle, a fight. There will be great opposition and therefore there will be great strain. The Christian life is not easy.

This is the "same" struggle as Paul himself. Paul sets himself up as an example of how to suffer. There is emphasis on the word "same" in the Greek. Our struggles are no different than the apostle's!

"which you saw in me and now hear is in me"

Two thousand years later we face the same things as the apostle Paul. The things he faced then, we face now. We face the "same" conflicts.

The Philippians saw when he was there how he coped with suffering and now, from over 1000 miles away, they are still hearing it. They saw what happened to him right in their own city, "but even after we had suffered before and were spitefully treated at Philippi, as you know, we were bold in our God to speak to you the gospel of God with much conflict" (I Thess. 2:2).

Now Paul is still in jail. "I was in prison in Philippi and now I am in prison in Rome." He saw the inside of many prisons. It was not because he was a criminal but because he preached the gospel.

PRINCIPLE: People who do the right things for the right reasons face agony, Paul did. It is good to know that we are not alone in suffering. Mutual

suffering deepen mutual sympathies when we progress through common suffering.

APPLICATION: Some Christians expect nothing but smooth seas in life. If the great apostle Paul had his troubles, should not we face our problems as well? Believers who never engage in the bloody warfare of sharing their faith will never know the deep communion of the saints. Orientation in life is not gained by avoiding pain but by sharing it. Here is an opportunity for us to show the stuff we are made of.

Philippians, Chapter Two

Philippians 2:1

"Therefore if there is any consolation in Christ, if any comfort of love, if any fellowship of the spirit, if any affection and mercy"

In Verses 1-4 of chapter 2 Paul continues his call to harmony, but now the emphasis shifts to fellowship. 2:1 deals with motivation for unity.

There is a huge difference between union and unity. Two people get married, that is union but not necessarily unity! Two churches can merge but that may not be unity either. That is union, not necessarily unity. If we tie two cats by the tail and throw them over a clothes line, that is union but not unity. Unity has to do with healthy relationships, not structure. Mechanical union is phantom, a counterfeit for unity of the heart.

The word "if" occurs four times in verse 1. Each "if" deals with a motivation for unity. In each "if" is an entitlement every believer possesses at the point of salvation. Paul appeals to unity on the basis of four fringe benefits every Christian enjoys at salvation.

"Therefore if there is any consolation in Christ"

The "therefore" harks back to 1:27, "that you stand fast in one spirit, with one mind striving together for the faith of the gospel."

The four "if"s in verse 1 all mean "since." They are statements of fact. All four grounds of appeal are based on some fact that is true of the Christian. The argument is based on our divine provisions.

The first appeal to divine certainty is to our "consolation in Christ." There is encouragement in our union with Christ. This is positional truth. When

God looks down on us he sees us "in Christ." We hold the same status quo as Jesus Christ in God's eyes. Jesus Christ had eternal life, therefore, we have eternal life. Jesus Christ had perfect righteousness, therefore, we have perfect righteousness. This is a judicial or forensic righteousness. It is true of us regardless of our experience. There is consolation, motivation and encouragement in that!

Unity is a by-product of our oneness with Christ. If our status quo in Christ does not make an appeal to us, there may be no life in Christ at all. There may be no genuine contact with Christ at all. Or, a believer may be so spiritually dead that he does not respond to what Christ has done for him/her.

PRINCIPLE: The believer has a status quo before God that is equivalent to that of Jesus Christ. There is comfort and motivation in that.

APPLICATION: Do you live out your Christian life based on the provisions Christ has made for you? Or, do you live your Christian life to gain the approbation or favor of God?

In 2:1 Paul challenges the Philippians toward unity with four incentives. We come to the second catalyst for unity.

"if any comfort of love"

This second "if" is also a fact and can be translated "since." Since it is true that we are comforted by God's love.

"Comfort" means a speaking near or with someone. It comes to mean admonition, encouraging, consolatory exhortation, invitation or entreaty. This is a speaking with someone to show them God's love. This is persuasion that come from an understanding of God's love. God's love in our hearts produces unity.

"Comfort" is a greater degree of tenderness than "consolation." There is a tender persuasiveness of love. Paul says in effect, "if the tenderness of God's love has any power to touch you, listen to what I am about to say from verse two and following."

There is comfort in being loved. People who feel that they are not wanted are people who do not sense love. There is great comfort in knowing that you are wanted by God.

When people feel wanted and loved, they are relaxed. They are not constantly trying to prove themselves. Christians know that they are loved "with an everlasting love." God is not going to stop loving us at some point. Therefore, we have confidence and trust in his infinite, unchanging, undying love.

Human love is finite. It can change quickly. It is far more fickle than God's love for us. God's love has stability. We can count on God's love. This kind of love is catalytic to the Christian life.

There is great comfort and security in being loved by someone who will not be daunted by anything in us.

PRINCIPLE: God loves us with an unconditional love, therefore, we can count on his commitment to us.

APPLICATION: Do you employ God's unconditional love as a motivation for your fellowship with fellow believers?

"if any fellowship of the Spirit"

This third "if" is also a fact and can be translated "since." Since it is true that we have fellowship with the Holy Spirit. Paul assumes this as a fact.

The word "fellowship" means common participation in the same things. Christians commonly participate in the same things as the Holy Spirit. They may refer to the fellowship that comes from the Holy Spirit.

If we have a community with the Holy Spirit then we are ready for community with other Christians. It is the Holy Spirit who will bring unity to a local church. He alone can bring cosmos out of chaos, order out of disorder. If the Holy Spirit joins in mutually with us, he will put our hearts right.

In radio or television if we are not on the right station, we will not receive the program. If we are not in tune with the Holy Spirit unity will be like a radio wave that passes us by without connection.

We fellowship with the Spirit. The Holy Spirit is to us what the Lord Jesus was to the twelve when he was with them on earth. Jesus had great fellowship with them. The Holy Spirit should have great fellowship with us. He is closer to us than Jesus with the apostles. He indwells in each believer.

PRINCIPLE: The believer has the privilege to fellowship with the Holy Spirit who indwells him. This is motivating to the Christian life.

APPLICATION: Do you fellowship with the Holy Spirit? Do you not do some things because it may grieve him (Eph 4:30)? We must not make the Holy Spirit a "partner" in some shady deal or iniquity.

We come to the last of the four motivations for unity.

"if any affection and mercy,"

Once again, this "if" is true. It can be translated "since." "Since it is true that we have affection and mercy." Paul assumes that it is normal for Christians to have concern and love for each other.

The word "affection" means tender affection, whether it expresses itself in love, mercy or compassion. This is the term for the seat of our feelings.

"Affection" means the seat of compassion, and "mercy" means mercy itself. Paul assumes that we both have a heart for mercy and that we execute mercy. That is normal Christian life. "If you have a heart and if your heart expresses itself in mercy, listen to me." That is a powerful appeal for unity.

"Mercy" is subjective compassion. As mercy witnesses the misfortunes of others it has a sense of sorrow for the ills of others.

The Lord Jesus when he saves a soul makes a hard, cruel, coarse person different. That person now has a capacity to be kind, gentle and loving. Culture does not do that. Government cannot do that.

PRINCIPLE: A person who has come to know Christ has a capacity to extend affection and mercy and, in fact, extends mercy. That is the reality of being a true Christian.

APPLICATION: Since you have become a Christian no doubt you have sensed a new capacity to extend mercy. If that is true, to whom is your mercy extended?

Philippians 2:2

"fulfill my joy by being like-minded, having the same love, being of one accord, of one mind"

Having appealed to four powerful, poignant motivations in verse one, Paul now makes his challenge. He challenges them to harmony, vv2-4.

This challenge is that they would develop four areas of harmony:

- like-minded
- same love
- of one accord
- of one mind

"fulfill my joy by being like-minded"

"Fulfill" means literally to make full or to fill. It came to mean in usage fulfill, perform fully, complete, accomplish. This verb applies to all four characteristics believers are to form (listed above).

The grammar indicates that action upon these four motivations of verse 1 should be done decisively. This is not something that you ease into. It takes a decisive decision or else we will continue to indulge ourselves in schism.

Paul's joy will be completed or accomplished if the Philippians develop these four qualities of unity. They will fulfill Paul's joy. There is great joy to Christian leaders to see their followers manifesting dynamic unanimity.

The first earmark of unity is to be "like-minded". Literally it means to think the same thing. This is unity of attitude. Where minds are in tune they are in attitude one.

In the last chapter we find the culprits who caused such schism in the Philippian church, "I implore Euodia and I implore Syntyche to be of the same mind in the Lord" (4:2). They were bitter in attitude toward each other.

The term "same mind" used in chapter four and here is basically the same in the Greek. In what sense are we to have the same mind? Are we all to think like "cookie cutter" Christians? Are we not to have individual opinions about things? Obviously not. The term for "mind" means attitude. We are to be one in attitude, not in actual thoughts.

The oneness of attitude comes from knowing the Lord and his revelation (the Word). The closer we are to him the closer we are to one another.

PRINCIPLE: Attitude is central to the Christian way of life. Oneness of attitude is the principle here.

APPLICATION: An attitude is a habit of thinking, a bearing in life. What is your mental orientation towards others? Is it bitter, resentful? Deal with it decisively.

Having looked at the first area of harmony (oneness of attitude) we turn to the second phrase "having the same love."

This is unity of affection, two hearts beating as one. It will fulfill Paul's joy if the Philippians have "the same love."

The word "having" means to go on having, constantly having. The request is not for an event where Christians state their love for one another. He is asking for a life style of loving each other. We are to constantly apply the principle of loving one another to our experience.

This love is probably based on the appeal to love in verse one, "if any comfort of love." We are motivated because of God's unconditional love for us. Because we have been loved by God, we ought to love one another. When we talk about love at the end of the twentieth century we are in danger of reading our cultural view of love back into the Bible. Love is more than maudlin sentiment. Sometimes we love the best when our love is tough, when we do the right thing for a person. Sloppy love with no norms is not biblical love.

The expressions of our love may change. A good parent shows pleasure at an accomplishment of their child. When a parent is pleased, he/she needs to show it. When a child steps out of line, not to discipline is to hurt the child. The most loving thing we can do for the child in that situation is to discipline. Our love for other believers may have a number of looks.

If a boy breaks the neighbor's window and we say, "that's all right" and pat him on the head. We have taught him not to respect other people's property. That is not love that is maudlin sentimentality. But, if we discipline the child without an attitude of love, that is not love either. The love of the parent needs to be based on norms that are independent from negative attitudes.

The word "same" means selfsame. Love should be mutual. If it is mutual there is a much higher likelihood that harmony will exist between people or groups. If we try to discredit someone, a breakdown in mutual love has developed. The momentum of the cycle of mutually operating on the best norms for each other has cracked. If one breaks out of this cycle then the other may be tempted to break out and penalize the other for the hurt they incited.

PRINCIPLE: The believer is to have an attitude of mutual (selfsame) love because that will eventually establish a momentum of love.

APPLICATION: Are we the one who breaks out of the momentum of love? Do we violate the norms of relationships?

In the first part of this verse Paul appealed to unity through like-mindedness and love. He continues his plea with a third characteristic of unity.

"being of one accord"

This phrase means literally "co-souled", "soul with soul." This is unity of sentiment, a unity of life in love. Christians should have souls that are in harmony.

A common disposition will follow from unity of thought and affection. This is a symphony of the soul. If a note is struck, the same note will answer when in key with another instrument. Everything has its note.

Musical instruments are sensitive and readily get out of tune. A common tuning instrument is necessary to keep instruments in harmony.

PRINCIPLE: Christians should have a harmony of souls with each other.

APPLICATION: Our common tuning instrument with each other is God himself. If we each individually keep our lives in tune with God, we can be in tune with each other. The discord will become lost in the orchestra of glorious praise to God.

We come to the last result of Paul's fourfold appeal to unity (v1).

"of one mind"

Literally, this means to think one thing, "thinking the one thing."

This does not mean to think the same content from a human point of view. It does not mean that everyone is supposed to hold the same opinion. Nor does it mean that everyone is to interpret everything the same way.

This means that we are to think like Christ thinks. We have the mind of Christ, "For who has known the mind of the Lord that he may instruct him? But we have the mind of Christ" (I Co 2:16).

Note other passages on this subject, "Be of the same mind toward one another. Do not set your mind on high things, but associate with the humble. Do not be wise in your own opinion" (Rom. 12:16). "Now may the God of patience and comfort grant you to be like-minded toward one another" (Rom. 15:5)

PRINCIPLE: The content of our thinking should be the same as the Lord Jesus because we have his mind.

APPLICATION: Is the reason you do not have a good relationship with someone is that you do not think about the Word of God sufficiently?

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PRINCIPLE: The content of our thinking should be the same as the Lord Jesus because we have his mind.

APPLICATION: Is the reason you do not have a good relationship with someone is that you do not think about the Word of God sufficiently?

Philippians 2:3

"Let nothing be done through selfish ambition or conceit, but in lowliness of mind let each esteem others better than himself."

The plea for unity in Further commands in verses 3 and 4 are given on the basis of the privileges of verse one. Now he challenges problems of self-centeredness.

"Let nothing be done through selfish ambition or conceit"

Paul argues against two negative attitudes in this phrase.

"Through" indicates that Christians use these two negative attitudes to attain their goals in the Christian community.

"Selfish ambition" is the same term used in 1:17 for those who opposed Paul. This word is used again in 5:20 for a characteristic of the flesh. It means party-spirit or faction. This involves intrigue by a person who wants to promote his own cause.

Self assertiveness is a cultural value, not a Christian value. To impose our will on others and not respect their volition distorts unity. Strife is knocking others down by manipulation and intrigue. It tries to get people on their side by insidious means. So this person promotes his own cause by any means possible.

Some politicians care nothing about the truth; they just care whether their party wins. They are passionate about their point but care little about the its veracity. They do not care about the welfare of their constituency; they are simply squabblers in a petty campaign. They fight to win not to find truth. Many believers care little about truth; they simply want to win at all costs. The acclaim of men is more important than principle.

"Conceit" means empty glory. "Strife" is knocking others down in order to win; "conceit" is parading oneself before others. It means to deck oneself out with a facade that has nothing behind it. This person also lives for applause. An ovation from men is more important than the approval of God.

This is a person who appropriates to self what belongs to God. We are the ultimate purpose for our existence rather than God himself. We should be the means not the end. When we sit in the

status of God and deck ourselves in his majesty we operate in a shallow sovereignty. It is a shallow thing for us to take God's dues.

Where does self assertiveness end and vain glory begin? They appear to be two sides of the same coin.

PRINCIPLE: Intrigue and self glory damage the Christian community.

APPLICATION: Factions, feuding, bickering and attempts to manipulate other Christians into our viewpoint violate Christian norms. Our goal in this methodology is to parade ourselves; it is vanity.

The two negatives in the first part of this verse are followed by a positive. The thesis of promoting self for self glory has an antithesis--esteem others better than self.

"but in lowliness of mind"

A spirit of pride before other Christians is an indication of lack of humility before God and others.

"Lowliness of mind" is the opposite of selfish ambition and conceit. The word "mind" is attitude. The last citadel to capitulate before God is our attitude. An attitude is more than just thinking. An attitude is a habit of thinking, a frame of reference by which we make value judgments. So we are to lay low our attitudes so that we do not feel the need for self assertiveness and selfish approbation.

The antidote to pride is humility or deference to others. Might does not make right. That is the rule of the bully and braggart. Ruthless riding over the rights of others is the opposite of "lowliness of mind."

This is not self effacement, however. Lowliness of mind is thinking that everything we are is from God. We can never earn the right to hold ourselves above others. Everything we are is from the grace of God.

"let each esteem other better than himself"

The word "esteem" means to lead out before the mind, to regard or count it to be true. We are to count it to be true that others are better than us.

When we read this there is a temptation to whittle this down. In an age where self-esteem is so cen-

tral to our values the thought of attributing esteem to others is foreign to our thinking.

Notice that this does not say, "look for the good qualities in others that may be greater than ours, yet we still may be superior to them in many ways." With that thinking we could go unmo-
lested in our skyscraper of self orientation.

"The other" means to embrace an entirely new attitude toward our fellow. That is why we call it "humility." We place ourselves under others. There is no qualification to "the other." We do not place them above ourselves only if they are more intelligent or more handsome.

The word "other" is a reciprocal pronoun. This is a community where everyone is giving consideration to the other person. I consider you above me and you consider me above you. What a fellowship where everyone looks up to everyone else!

Paul is not asking us to do something that is untrue. He is not asking us to believe that someone has more brains or ability than we have and we know it is not true. This is talking about attitude, not capacity of personhood. We put others first in consideration rather than self.

When we truly see the other's point of view we truly give them respect. Self assertiveness and self pride ends when we give others respect. God expects my neighbor to possess the claim of respect by me. This has nothing to do with any illusion we may have about them; it is the grace of God in them that demands our respect.

PRINCIPLE: Lowliness of mind is humility. It is from humility that we are to relate to others. Our attitude should be one of deference toward others.

APPLICATION: We often have an exaggerated estimation of ourselves. However, we are to elevate our estimation of others.

Philippians 2:4

"Let each of you look out not only for his own interests, but also for the interests of others."

We live in a culture where everyone looks out for himself. The things of others do not concern us. Here we are introduced to the opposite value.

"Let each of you look out not only for his own interests"

This first phrase indicates the validity of looking out for our own interests. Paul is not asking from some supra spiritual self-sacrifice where we do not manage the life God has given us. Believers should attend to their own business. "But if anyone does not provide for his own, and especially for those of his household, he has denied the faith and is worse than an unbeliever" (I Tim. 5:8).

The word "look" means to mentally consider, to regard something as an aim. Some people are good at managing their own business; others are not. This word assumes that if we are good at managing our own business we are to make it our aim to consider the interests of others.

"Own interests" is our own point of view. We are not only to consider our own point of view. We are not to look out for our own things only.

"but also for the interests of others"

When it comes to doing things for others--some people stop at nothing!

If all of us are looking out for each other (spiritual reciprocity), the whole will be better than the parts. Instead of disregarding each other's interests we instead help each other. We deliberately choose the interests of others. True Christian community is when we take a joint- view of things.

This, however, does not mean that we are to be busy bodies poking our nose where it does not belong.

The Christian has no right to live his life by the law of the jungle. If we live our Christian life in community we cannot simply look out for number one. Looking out for our own interests to the exclusion of others is the rule of the braggart and bully. The person who is others oriented looks for qualities and good points in fellow Christians.

Some believers compare everything to themselves. They measure all people and situations up against their own viewpoint. This verse says that we are to step out of our viewpoint so that we are no longer an island where we alone are sovereign. This is a root cause of disunity. An acid test of our

Christian life is to love others who can be of no use to us.

PRINCIPLE: The Bible does not hold to the doctrine of exclusive privacy of the individual; mutual reciprocity of interest in others is Christian value.

APPLICATION: The word "others" is a haunting word to us at the end of the twentieth century. "First come, first served" is not a Christian attitude. The Christian makes a place for others. How large is the circle of our prayers? Do we pray for more than us four and no more, our family and very few others? A sign of spiritual maturity is that we are less concerned about ourselves in our prayer life. Do we look at things from the standpoint of others? Do we care about those who do not know Christ? Sharing Christ takes the interests of others.

Philippians 2:5

"Let this mind be in you which was also in Christ Jesus."

In this argument for unity Paul gave the most powerful example he could find--the Lord Jesus' attitude that took him to the cross. Jesus is set forth in all his towering superiority. There is hardly a greater passage which sets for this lofty supremacy of the person of Christ in the New Testament.

The main argument of his passage is unity and the person and work of Christ is almost presented incidentally. The greatest passage in the New Testament which argues for the God/man is an illustration for unity!

"Let this mind be in you"

The word "mind" here does not mean mental activity or intellectual process. It means attitude.

The only way God's people can have unity is to have the same mental attitude (vv1-4). But how do we develop an attitude? Is it by sheer volition? Do we simply determine to think in a certain way?

If an attitude is a frame of reference in our thinking, a habit of thinking, then we build that base of thinking by the application of God's truth to experience. The more we apply God's Word to situations of our lives throughout the week the more

we are going to think like God. When we think of Jesus' example when we face temptations to contention it will help form a correct attitude in the situation.

"which was also in Christ Jesus"

We need to have the same attitude Jesus had. What attitude did he have in his incarnation and death? He had a giving, selfless attitude. His thought pattern was unswervingly to pay for the sins of the world. It was sacrificial.

If believers are going to have an attitude like Christ it must be sacrificial. Sacrifice is fundamental to unity. If that obtains then we will not merely concern ourselves with our own interests. Everyone cannot always have their own way. Someone has to give.

Jesus was willing to spend and be spent for us. He qualifies as the greatest example of lowliness of mind. He followed the path of utter selflessness. He gave himself to the greatest of degradations--a criminal's death.

Yet he was God almighty, the highest of high. He went to a criminal's death, the lowest of low. He could not have suffered more than he did; he could not have gone further than he did. That is to be our attitude. We should put no limitations on our attitude of willingness to give to fellow Christians.

PRINCIPLE: We are to have the same attitude that Jesus had when he went to the cross for us--a sacrificial attitude.

APPLICATION: If Jesus regarded no sacrifice too great, no humiliation too painful, should not we have this sacrificial attitude toward fellow Christians?

Philippians 2:6

"Who, being in the form of God, did not consider it robbery to be equal with God"

In the context of an argument for unity Paul presents the most powerful argument in the New Testament for the Deity/humanity of Christ in 2:5-8.

The step from undiminished deity into a human body is the first phase of Jesus' humility.

"Who, being in the form of God,"

This is the first of seven steps downward of the sacrificial Son of God. These steps move from his undiminished deity to the death of a criminal on the cross. There is no human comparison to scale this step of Jesus. Oh, what a condescension! We often think of the cross as a humiliation but the incarnation was an enormous debase from his capacity as God.

We could never say of Moses or Abraham that they were "in the form of God." Jesus is the only person in time of which this statement could be made. He was equal in essence with God. Never in eternity past was he ever non-existent; with un-begun beginning he lives in eternal life. He never began to be God; he always was God. He always had perfect righteousness; his righteousness was absolute. This is just to name a couple attributes. He shared all essential attributes with God.

The word "form" does not mean shape, but essence. It does not refer to outward shape or outward form of a thing. Jesus was not identical to God, he was God in essence. He shares the very nature and attributes of God.

The word "being" refers to the original state of existence. In his original state he was God. Now he is about to take on another state--humanity. His original state was that of God; now he is about to stoop into a human body.

PRINCIPLE: Jesus was willing to go through a massive humility by stepping from his deity into humanity. If he did this, is it not incumbent upon us to do the same?

PRINCIPLE: Is humility a core value in your thinking? Is it even a fragmentary value? It was the heart of the one we love.

We have studied the first phrase, "who, being in the form of God" and saw that this means Jesus was equal with God in deity. Now we come to the last phrase.

Our Lord's incarnation commenced at the highest level--his deity. It was no big admission for him to consider himself equal with God because he was God.

"did not consider it robbery to be equal with God"

Jesus' thought pattern is seen in the word "consider." This is his thinking about becoming man and dying for the sins of the world. It was natural for him to think of himself as co-equal with the trinity. In eternity past, before creation, he thought about what he would do about salvation. Remember verse five, "let this mind be in you."

The first thing that Jesus thought was that it was not "robbery to be equal with God." "To be" means state of being. In the present tense this means eternal existence. He was eternally conscious of his existence with the trinity.

The word "robbery" means object of violent seizure, something to be eagerly seized. Jesus did not look upon equality with God as a treasure to find. He already possessed that treasure. From timeless eternity he always was God; why should he seek deity?

However, he was willing to step foot in a human body and set aside the voluntary use of his glory. He did not stop being God, for eternal life cannot stop. He set aside the use of his essence of God because of his mission.

Jesus considered our soul of greater value than the humility of taking on humanity. Deity cannot die on the cross, only his humanity. Eternal life cannot die for it is not temporal.

"Equal" means the same as. He was the same as God. He was undiminished in that equality.

PRINCIPLE: In eternity past Jesus had a thought pattern to disengage from the voluntary use of the glory of his deity to become a man.

APPLICATION: If Jesus valued the sacrifice of humility for the sake of others as a value which transcended his own interests, should not we do the same?

Philippians 2:7

"But made himself of no reputation, taking the form of a bondservant, and coming in the likeness of men."

In this section of Philippians which sets for the incarnation of Christ he is presented as commencing at the highest point of the universe ("the form

of God") to the lowest imaginable place, the death of the cross.

"But made himself of no reputation"

"No reputation" literally means "emptied" himself. This means he set aside the voluntary use of his incommunicable attributes (attributes which cannot be shared with man such as omniscience ((all knowing)) and omnipresence ((everywhere presence))).

The Lord Jesus emptied himself of the voluntary use of his deity in order to become incarnate. We often talk of the sacrifice of the cross. Yet the sacrifice of the incarnation is a sacrifice as well. The incarnation has been called "the great stoop." He stooped from the presence of God to the place of men. There is no greater humility than that. Never in his history did Jesus ever stop existing as God. He simply took of his badge of the majesty of deity.

We do everything in our power to build a reputation. Yet he shelved his rights as God. He thought more of us than he did of his own name. This was not forced upon him. He was not manipulated into doing this. He did it of his own will. He relinquished the celebrity of his deity.

"For you know the grace of our Lord Jesus Christ that though He was rich, yet for your sakes He became poor, that you through His poverty might become rich." II Cor. 8:9

"Became poor" means that he became a man. He was born in a stable in a carpenter's family. He had no money, owned no real estate, wrote no books, founded no university.

Our Lord made his appearance into this world as a baby. He conceivably come as a full grown man. That is the way Adam and Eve arrived in the world. Jesus chose to come as a baby.

PRINCIPLE: Jesus was willing to subsume his name for others.

APPLICATION: Do we love people enough to give up our reputation?

Here is the third statement of our Lord's descent from his glory as God.

"taking the form of a bondservant"

The word "form" here means "inner essence." He came in his essence as a slave. He did not come as a King. He might have been born in a castle instead of a cradle. He could have come to Rome instead of Bethlehem. He could have been born of a wealthy and noble family but this was not his strategy.

"For even the Son of Man did not come to be served, but to serve, and to give His life a ransom for many" (Mark 10:45).

Jesus' plan was to come as an abject slave (the idea of the word "servant" in the Greek). Jesus graphically portrayed this mentality when we washed the apostle's feet in John 13.

The word "taking" indicates that he did this willingly. He was not pressed into this service. He did it of his own volition. In verse six he existed in the "form of God", here he takes on the form of an abject slave. What a contrast! He laid aside the medallion of his majesty to become an abject slave.

PRINCIPLE: Jesus, though he possessed the prerogatives of deity, in his humanity held a servant mentality.

APPLICATION: The victim mentality of our day can be corrected by adopting the giving mentality of Jesus.

We come to the fourth statement about Jesus' condescension into humanity.

"and coming in the likeness of men."

Jesus was born in the "likeness of men." His birth was like other men, yet distinct.

"And the Word became flesh and dwelt among us" (John 1:14). The word "became" means to become something he was not before. What he was before was God. Now he changes from his preexistent deity to humanity.

"But when the fullness of the time had come, God sent forth His Son, born of a woman..." (Gal 4:4). He was born of a woman, not a male. His birth was via a virgin.

Jesus' virgin birth meant that he did not have a sinful nature. As well, he never committed an act of sin. These two facts qualified him to die for our sins as the spotless lamb of God. "For what the

law could not do in that it was weak through the flesh, God did by sending His own Son in the likeness of sinful flesh, on the account of sin" (Rom. 8:3). "For we do have a High Priest who cannot sympathize with our weaknesses, but was in all points tempted as we are, yet without sin" (Heb 4:15).

"Inasmuch then as the children have partaken of flesh and blood, He Himself likewise shared in the same, that through death He might destroy him who had the power of death, that is, the devil" (Heb 2:14).

The angel Gabriel said to Mary: "...that Holy One who is to be born will be called the Son of God" (Lk 1:35). Jesus' birth was unique. Everything about him was unique. He was truly God and truly man. Both his first coming and his second coming will be unique.

Without his unique birth there is no way those without Christ could get to heaven. He had to take that body to the cross to suffer for sin: "Sacrifice and offering You did not desire, But a body You have prepared for me" (He 10:5).

PRINCIPLE: The birth of Jesus was unique; he was qualified in an exceptional way to die for our sin.

APPLICATION: Do we hold Jesus unique in our hearts?

Philippians 2:8

"And being found in appearance as a man, he humbled himself and became obedient to the point of death, even the death of the cross."

The fifth statement of Jesus' descent into humanity is "and being found in appearance as a man."

"And being found in appearance as a man"

All most people could see about Jesus was that he was another man. "And when we see Him, There is no beauty that we should desire Him" (Isa. 53:2). To most people he looked like a Galilean, a carpenter. Artists put a halo around his head but when he was upon earth he had no halo.

"For there is one God and one Mediator between God and men, the Man Christ Jesus" (I Tim. 2:5).

"But this Man, after He had offered one sacrifice for sins forever, sat down at the right hand of God" (Heb. 2:12).

"The first man was of the earth, made of dust; the second Man is the Lord from heaven" (I Co 15:47).

Jesus was not 50% God and 50% man. He was undiminished deity and true humanity. "...God was manifested in the flesh" (I Tim.. 3:16).

PRINCIPLE: Jesus was both undiminished deity and true humanity.

APPLICATION: Have we subtly confused the greatness and uniqueness of who Jesus is by merging in our minds his deity and humanity?

The sixth statement of the great stoop of the Lord Jesus is "he humbled himself."

"he humbled himself"

Jesus' life was not extracted from him. He gave his life freely. His blood was not spilt; it was shed. Spilt speaks of an accident. His death was planned from eternity, "...the Lamb slain from the foundation of the world" (Rev. 13:8).

Our Lord spoke of humility in Luke 14:11, "For whoever exalts himself will be humbled, and he who humbles himself will be exalted." God's people are to humble themselves. He set the great example. God will not do this for us. This we must do. However, if we go on in our willful way, God will humble us, "lest, when I come again, my God will humble me among you" (II Co. 12:21). If I refuse to humble myself, God will humble me.

Our Lord Jesus Christ humbled himself. He was no unwilling victim who was maneuvered to the cross where he could not extricate himself. He counted the cost; he knew exactly what was involved. He was born to die.

"Therefore My Father loves Me, because I lay down My life that I may take it again. No one takes it from Me, but I lay it down of Myself, I have power to lay it down, and I have power to take it again. This command I have received from My Father" (John 10:17,18).

"Who gave Himself for our sin, that He might deliver us from this present evil age" (Gal. 1:4).

"...the Son of God, who loved me and gave Himself for me" (Gal. 2:20).

"As Christ also has loved us and given Himself for us, an offering and a sacrifice to God for a sweet-smelling aroma" (Eph. 5:1).

"Husbands, love your wives, just as Christ also loved the church and gave Himself for her" (Eph. 5:25).

It is clear that Jesus willingly gave, donated his life for us. He humbled himself. Looking down the corridors of time he saw us in the grip of sin and willingly gave himself for us.

PRINCIPLE: To humble oneself involves volition.

APPLICATION: Have we with deliberation humbled ourselves for the sake of others?

We now come to the seventh and final statement of the enormous descent of the Lord Jesus from the essence of God to a criminal's death.

"and became obedient to the point of death, even the death of the cross "

Jesus was obedient to the point of death. He did not stop half way. If he did not die there would be no salvation for man.

For Jesus to die was not unique; everyone dies. Mark the word "even." He was more than obedient unto death; he went further than death. He went to the cross death. That would be equivalent to the "death chamber" today. He died a criminal's death. The cross was the instrument by which the Roman government executed its criminals. It was a slow death.

The cross was the goal of the incarnation. "Having wiped out the handwriting of requirements [the law] that was against us, which was contrary to us. And He has taken it out of the way, having nailed it to the cross" (Col. 2:14). Jesus was nailed to the cross and with him the judgments of the law against us.

The cross is the focal point of God's dealings with us. That is where our redemption from sin was worked out. By shedding his blood on the cross he paid the price for all sin for all time. "God was in Christ reconciling the world to Himself, not imputing their trespasses to them" (II Cor. 5:19).

The cross is a bloody issue with which to deal. The cross is offensive to many people. The cross offends people, especially religious people (Gal. 5:11). Religion leads people to believe that if they lead a decent life they will be acceptable to God. People run to religion to tell them that they are "ok." Some are offended when they hear an honest physician tell them a diagnosis they do not want to hear. They run to quacks to tell them about some panacea. They are not looking for a doctor, they are looking for a quack.

PRINCIPLE: Only the cross of Christ can save us from our sin.

APPLICATION: Have you come to the point of accepting the fact that it is only the cross of Christ which is sufficient to pay for your sins before a holy God?

Philippians 1:9

"Therefore God also has highly exalted him and given him the name which is above every name"

Verses 2:5-8 set forth the descent of the Lord Jesus. Verses 2:9-11 present his ascent. This is not his ascension but his ascent in the minds of both God and man.

Jesus went from the highest point imaginable, the "form of God" (the essence of God) to the lowest place conceivable, the "death of the cross."

"Therefore"

Every time we see a "therefore" we should look to see what it is there for! Because of the humiliation of Christ in incarnation and cross, God will exalt him.

Jesus did not stay on the cross. He is in glory; he escaped the tomb. Most of the founders of religion are dead and buried but not the Lord Jesus. He is alive today. If you want to start a religion today all you have to do is die, be buried and rise again! Obviously the Lord Jesus is the unique Savior of the universe. He took the round trip from heaven to earth and back again.

"God also has highly exalted him"

To exalt him is one thing, to "highly" exalt him is another. The Lord Jesus towers with towering superiority over anyone else. He is the great Unlike,

the single Son of God. He is the quintessence of exaltation.

Jesus is the center of worship in God's mind: "Him God has exalted to His right hand to be Prince and Savior, to give repentance to Israel and forgiveness of sins" (Acts 5:31).

Worship must have content. To worship out of an emotional vacuum does not honor the Lord. He is to be worshipped for something. Jesus went from the heights of heaven to the depths of death for us. Much of today's music is without substance. The lyrics lack content. On the other hand, some music today focuses our attention on the Lord in ways the old hymns wanted. In any case, true worship involves worshipping the Lord for something.

PRINCIPLE: Worship requires content.

APPLICATION: Jesus is the basis of true worship. The way we can measure whether we are truly worshipping is to take note of the content of our worship. Music that does not focus on some content such as the incarnation, death, ascension, resurrection and ascension of the Lord Jesus is merely emotional vacuum.

When someone calls us a "name" they place a label upon us. Usually in our culture this has a bad implication. However, in this passage God gives a name to the Lord Jesus. God is placing a label upon the Lord Jesus, an exalted label.

"and given him the name"

God gave Jesus a unique name; he set him apart from any other name. Jesus is the great Unlike; he is totally unique because he stepped foot out of heaven and came to earth to die and rise again because of our sin.

The word "name" is equivalent to character. Character is beyond reputation. A person might have a good reputation but not have integrity. A name spells out who and what a person is.

Becoming a Christian has to do with Jesus' name, "...to those who believe in his name" (John 1:12), "...because he has not believed in the name of the only begotten Son of God" (3:18). "Nor is there salvation in any other, for there is no other name under heaven given among men by which we must be saved" (Acts 4:12).

Prayer is to be executed in Jesus' name, "And whatever you ask in My name, that I will do, that the Father may be glorified in the Son. If you ask anything in My name, I will do it" (John 14:13,14). God has labeled Jesus and we are identified with his exalted position. This identification is not because of who we are but because of who he is. Our association with Jesus gives us prerogative with God.

"which is above every name"

God has placed him in rank above everyone and everything else. In God the Father's estimation, his identity is above all else. Jesus has been given the unique name above all else. His name is set apart from all others. His character is totally unique.

PRINCIPLE: We possess a uniqueness in God's eyes because of the esteem he holds for his Son. We have a unique identity.

APPLICATION: To not appreciate who we are in Christ is to diminish what Jesus did for us. We have value because of our association with him. The reason we do not recognize the worth of Christ is that we do not appreciate who he is and what he did. God the Father, however, saw the value of what he did and highly exalted him.

Philippians 2:10

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

Since Christ has been exalted the nature of worship has been changed. All worship focuses on Jesus Christ.

"That at the name of Jesus every knee should bow"

Not "at" but "in" the name of Jesus. This is not mere genuflection. This is reverent worship. Jesus is the object of our worship.

Note the word "every" in "every knee should bow." This is universal subjugation, not universal salvation. The Bible teaches that one day every individual will face the Lord Jesus. When that happens every knee will bow in acknowledgment of his Lordship. They will acknowledge him as King Jesus. They will concede to his right of sovereignty.

The word "that" introduces a purpose clause. Christ is glorified for a purpose--that all creatures might worship him, both angelic and human.

"Of those in heaven" means angels and people who have gone to heaven.

"Those on earth" refers to human beings who are alive in time.

"Those under the earth" probably refers to fallen angels.

PRINCIPLE: Jesus has the right of absolute sovereignty over our lives.

APPLICATION: In view of the fact that we will one day concede to his sovereignty why not begin now? If you are not a Christian there be a day where you will see his sovereignty and rights in clear light. If you are a Christian with a rebellion in your heart, why not submit that area of your life to him now?

Philippians 2:11

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

For the third time in three verses the word "every" occurs: "every name," "every knee," and now "every tongue."

The issue in Jesus' glorification is not his Saviorhood but his Lordship. Jesus has the rights to my life; he is my Master.

"and that every tongue should confess"

"Confess" means to acknowledge a debt owed. The word "confess" here is intense and it means to "confess out." This is an out and out consent, to consent fully. God wants us to acknowledge openly, that is, publicly that Jesus is Lord.

All of creation at one point will give an out and out acknowledgment of the right of Jesus to be Lord.

This worship will be with the tongue. We need to verbalize our praise and worship. The tongue expresses our heart and thoughts of the Lord Jesus.

"that Jesus Christ is the Lord, to the glory of God the Father."

When we acknowledge the Lordship of Jesus we glorify the Father. We contribute to the glory of God when we confess Jesus as our Lord.

We should consult our Lord whether we should do something. "I don't know whether I should do this or not, I will check with the Lord." Most of us check with our husband or wife about the course of our lives. Should we do less with the Sovereign Lord of the universe?

PRINCIPLE: When we acknowledge the Lordship of Christ we glorify God.

APPLICATION: There is no one as worthy as the Lord of glory. He merits everything we have before God; the best is none too good for him. If we commit ourselves to the Lordship of Christ, it will save us untold grief. It will bring blessing to our lives. But most of all it will bring delight to the heart of God. It will glorify God the Father because he decreed the plan to send Jesus to save us from past, present and future sin. God did the doing so God gets the glory.

Philippians 2:12

"Therefore, my beloved, as you have always obeyed, not as in my presence only, but now much more in my absence, work out your own salvation with fear and trembling"

The Philippian church was one of the best churches in the New Testament but they were not without their problems. They had an ongoing personality conflict. Two women were holding an ongoing feud. People began to support one or the other; the church began to polarize into two groups. As a result the whole church was taking sides. The church found itself in a very vexatious situation.

"Therefore, my beloved, as you have always obeyed"

The "therefore" connects these verses with verses 8-11. This word acts like a hinge which connects the Philippians to Christ. Christ gave himself in humility, even the humility of a criminal's death. The whole point of the illustration of Christ is to show the Philippians true humility. The "therefore" draws an inference from the example of

Christ. They are to keep their motivation for their relationships with Christ in view.

"My beloved" indicates that Paul is using sensitive language. This expression also reminded them of their love for the apostle. Paul is not angry; he is grieved. It broke his heart to think that a church he founded was about ready to split. They were not sharing Christ, they were not sending out missionaries. They were more concerned with who was right. Their only concern was to determine who was right, Euodias or Syntyche. "Which side are you on?" The church reduced to taking pot shots at one another.

"As you have always obeyed" means that in the past they were obedient to Paul's authority when he challenged them to change.

"not as in my presence only, but now much more in my absence"

Paul could not come to Philippi; he was in jail. Paul no doubt wished he could come and sit down with Euodias and Syntyche and work out their differences with them. He hopes that they will respond to his authority now that he is absent. That is, that they will obey God's Word, the book of Philippians.

PRINCIPLE: In tense relationships God's Word needs to be applied to one's life independently of people.

APPLICATION: Are you contributing to a schism in a local church? Is having your own way more important than the progress of the gospel? Are you willing to let the Word of God so grip you as to not allow your relationships to deteriorate?

The Bible presents three kinds of salvation: the initial salvation from the penalty of sin, progressive salvation from the power of sin and ultimate salvation from the presence of sin. Here we have the second of the three, salvation of a church from sin in its midst.

This is the salvation of the church's ministry due to division.

"work out your own salvation"

Paul is saying here, "I cannot get out of jail at this time so you must work out the salvation of the church from this church split." "Salvation" here is the corporate salvation of the church at Philippi.

This is salvation from division, pride and selfishness.

"Work out" has the idea of bringing to completion, to a conclusion. Paul is saying, "don't stop half way when it comes to divisions in the church. Clean it up."

Everyone was displaying their sin capacity: "I think that Euodias is right." "Well, I think Syn-tyche is right!" The church took the lid off the garbage can. It was an ugly scene. They were not winning people to Christ; they were operating a religious debating society to determine who was right.

Notice that nothing is said of working for your salvation. There is not one line in the Bible to support that.

"with fear and trembling"

This phrase means "don't attack the problem heavy handed." If they use the heavy hand approach it will split the church. A general practitioner cannot perform brain surgery. Care must be taken when people hold strong differences of opinion. This is just the opposite of what was happening in Philippi.

Approach the resolution of this problem "with fear and trembling" for fear of bungling the job. People are sensitive and can be hurt very easily. A situation like this requires kid gloves. Many people wear their feelings on their sleeve. They have both real and imaginary hurts. Everyone likes to be appreciated and noticed. They want to feel they are an asset.

PRINCIPLE: It takes maturity and skill to handle deep divisions among people.

APPLICATION: Most divisions are attitudinal. It was said of the Lord, "For even the Son of Man did not come to be served, but so serve, and to give His life a ransom for many" (Mark 10:45). That is a major attitude! But, alas, that is not the attitude of most of us. We want people to cater to us. We want them to be nice to us. But we do not want to go out of our way to minister to them. The attitude of our Savior was to give in a self sacrificing way.

Philippians 2:13

"For it is God who works in you both to will and to do for his good pleasure."

It is one thing for the leaders at Philippi to try to resolve the church split even with a sensitive approach (v.12). However, it is another thing to trust God to work it out. This is the subject of verse 13.

The only way this could be realized was through God who would enable them to do it (v. 13). Both divine enablement and human responsibility are involved in getting God's work done.

"for it is God who works in you"

Believers are partners with God, laboring together with Him. The verb "works" (v. 13) means "energizes" or "provides enablement." God makes his own both willing and desirous to do his work. This has to do with confidence in God's work in God's church. If we submit to God's will, he will work in his own inimitable way.

The word "works" is always used supernaturally and of effective action in the Bible. God's work will not be frustrated. God will effect the result.

God is working according to a blue print, according to specifications. He will carry out his plan. Either he will work in us or he will work on us. Either way he will accomplish his purpose. God has taken an oath that every Christian will ultimately be just like the Lord Jesus no matter what it costs him.

We have all seen the sign on the highway "MEN AT WORK." We can put a sign over the Christian: "GOD AT WORK." "Being confident of this very thing, that he who has begun a good work in you will complete it until the day of Jesus Christ" (1:6).

PRINCIPLE: God will enable us to resolve conflict. Once we are born again that triggers a process that will last until we go to glory (glorified).

APPLICATION: God will ultimately resolve broken relationships. In the meantime he may have to chisel, sand, steel wool and polish us. God constantly polishes us until we have a humble attitude like the Lord Jesus. He works until we are not nearly as selfish as we were. We begin to recognize that we are hurt because we have too much pride for the size of us.

The first part of this verse emphasizes God's work. This is God's providential work in our lives.

"both to will and to do for his good pleasure"

God is providentially working in us for his pleasure. Note how another verse emphasizes the same point:

"Now may the God of peace who brought up our Lord Jesus from the dead, that great Shepherd of the sheep, through the blood of the everlasting covenant, make you complete in every good work to do His will, working in you what is well pleasing in His sight, through Jesus Christ, to whom be glory forever and ever. Amen" (Heb. 13:20,21).

"Both to will and to do": God wills it; God does it. God is omniscient, therefore, he can will exactly; God is omnipotent, therefore, he can do anything that is consistent with his nature. He can perfect his plan in us. God has a plan for our lives:

"For we are His workmanship, created in Christ Jesus for good works, which God prepared beforehand that we should walk in them" (Eph. 2:10).

We often miss a major point in Romans 8:28-30 because we focus so much on predestination. "And we know that all things work together for good to those who love God, to those who are called according to His purpose." All things are not good but they work together for good to serve God's designs. There are no pure second causes (human volition). All human volition is concurred by God. Therefore, God is in control of everything that happens to us.

God is working according to a blueprint. The project is to make us conform to the image of Jesus Christ: "For whom He foreknew, He also predestined to be conformed to the image of His Son, that He might be the firstborn among many brethren" (8:29). The "for" indicates that verses 29-30 are the ground for verse 28.

God has predestinated that every saved person will be just like the Lord Jesus. It is incidental to God how many years we live. It is negligible in the light of eternity. But God has taken an oath that we will be just like the Lord Jesus no matter the cost. And we do not have a thing to say about it! This is the doctrine of glorification. Once we are

born again that triggers a process that will not conclude until we are glorified.

PRINCIPLE: God is working on us providentially so that ultimately we will be glorified.

APPLICATION: If we decide to rebel against God's providential work in our lives and say "I am not going to submit to the Lordship of Jesus" then we need to be broken like a bronco. God will either break my physical or my spirit. He will bring us to the point where we submit to his will.

God is working according to a blueprint with all its specifications. With some of us the work is going rather slowly. Therefore, he has to send his "providential agencies." If we do not respond to God's Word then he sends providential situations in our lives to get our attention. It may be a tragic accident, a terrible mistake, a calamity or catastrophe. These are no accidents. Everything is by divine design in the life of the child of God. God's timing is exquisite. He does not wait for us to approve of his methods either.

Philippians 2:14

Do all things without complaining and disputing.

Verse 14 substantiates the interpretation that "salvation" in verse 13 is talking about the salvation of the local church at Philippi from splitting.

"Complaining and disputing" are sins generally accepted in evangelical circles.

DO ALL THINGS

The Greek places emphasis upon the word "all." Every thing a believer does should be done without complaining and disputing. No exceptions.

COMPLAINING

Grumbling is a bad attitude. Grumbling was a favorite indoor sport of the nation Israel, "nor complain, as some of them also complained, and were destroyed by the destroyer" (I Co. 10:10). They loved to murmur against their leadership. They muttered, complained, criticized, griped and harped against Moses.

Parents know what this means. You ask your children to do something and they give a little lip. Yet believers sometimes "sass" God with their discontent about their lot in life. Some Christians are perpetually unhappy; nothing pleases some folk. Everything is wrong; nothing is right. All their

fingers are thumbs. They are on the negative side of every positive question and on the positive side of every negative question. They are born inside out. They love misery.

This attitude is also contagious. They make everyone else miserable. If we are feeling "dog tired" it may be that we growled and grumbled all day!

ARGUING

This term has legal connotations of disputing. Some folk love to debate; they love to argue. They just love to hear themselves talk.

Some people develop a vacuum when someone is not acting upon them so that they are stimulated. In that vacuum they murmur and argue. They love to kick their bean bags. If they cannot kick their dog they will argue with their mate. Self-pity is behind all complaining and argumentative attitudes. This is usually a self-pity that is based on an exaggerated opinion of oneself. The rest of the world does not know what our ego knows about ourselves!

The trouble is that our ego has been hurt by lack of recognition and appreciation for the "real us." Yet the real us is a complainer which everyone avoids if at all possible!

PRINCIPLE: Murmuring, complaining and arguing are manifestations of discontent. Discontent is a rejection of God's providential working in our lives.

APPLICATION: Have we considered the possibility of praying over what we do not like? There are some things we learn to leave in the hands of God. We learned that when faced surgery or some other emergency. Why fuss and stew? Just leave it with God.

Philippians 2:15

That you may become blameless and harmless, children of God without fault in the midst of a crooked and perverse generation, among whom you shine as lights in the world.

This religious feud whereby the Philippian church was complaining to God and to each other and arguing with each other (v.14) made a negative statement to the world. People will write them off; they will get their number; they will make allowances for them. This dispute hurt their testimony.

that you may become blameless

"Blameless" is the first of four standards which will contravene strife among Christians. This word means "above reproach." It does not mean sinless perfection. It connotes free from censure. This means freedom from criticism from others.

One day we shall be spotless, faultless and flawless. That day we will be perfect and flawless, "Now to Him who is able to keep you from stumbling, And to present you faultless before the presence of His glory with exceeding joy" (Jude 24) Now we can be blameless.

The corporate testimony of the Philippian church was at stake. They were called upon to live in such a way that those outside Christ could not rightfully point an accusing finger at them.

PRINCIPLE: The church (as individuals) should take care of their image (reputation).

APPLICATION: Before our testimony can be effective in our community we need to set straight any broken relationships. This is especially true if we are contributing to a church at war. When non-Christians censure us, the gospel is at stake. We should give as little ground as possible for them to pick flaws in our character.

The second standard which will contravene a poor testimony is a believer should become "harmless." The Philippian church was not a "shining light" (v.15) in the world. Therefore, non-Christians were not attracted to the Lord.

...harmless

"Harmless" means pure or unadulterated. This word was used in the first century for a wine that had not been diluted. Often an ancient tavern keeper, after his customer would become inebriated, would dilute his drinks with water. His taste buds were not as keen. Such a person was called a huckster.

The opposite of a huckster is a person who is genuine. The believer should not water his life down with the energy of the flesh.

This same word was used in Matthew 10:16, "Therefore be wise as serpents and harmless as doves." This does not mean that the believer is to

be naive but authentic or bona fide in their Christian walk.

PRINCIPLE: A believer should live an unadulterated life, a genuine life unmixed with signals which go in opposite directions at once.

APPLICATION: It is a great mistake for a person to believe that he must experience evil to know it. God's value is genuineness, freedom from the mixture of the flesh. This will send a consistent signal to those without Christ.

The third standard for overcoming schism among believers is becoming children of God in character. Before our testimony can be effective we must behave like "children of God."

...children of God

The word "become" means to become something that we were not before. This passage says that we are to become children of God. He is speaking here to the Philippian church. How can children of God become children of God?

The point is that the child of God should act like a child of God. He should be conscious of who he is. He should be conscious of his image. "I am a child of the King! I do not have to fuse and fume with other Christians."

Royalty does not put their feet upon the dinner table. A child of God does not do battle with other children of God. "I have no time for petty things." Life is too short to engage in a running battle with another Christian.

PRINCIPLE: To overcome hostility among Christians, we must understand and act upon our identity as a child of God.

APPLICATION: This is an identity issue. We usually act in accordance with how we deem ourselves. If we think of ourselves as a child of God then we can anticipate how our identity reflects on our actions. Every thing I do reflects on King Jesus the Lord of glory. "I must comport myself as a child of the King. There is work to be done; there are souls to be saved." Everything we do as a child of God we do without murmuring, disputing, griping; we do it brightly, wholeheartedly, enthusiastically.

The fourth standard to keep in mind if one is tempted with schism is "without fault" mentality.

Do we have something in our lives by which non-Christians use to not believe the claims of Christ?

...without fault

"Without fault" means without blemish and therefore not open to censure. It is one in whom there is nothing reprehensible or shameful. This person has no stain or disgrace upon their life. Again, this is not teaching sinless perfection. It means that the believer should not live his life in a way that opens it to criticism from the world.

This is the fourth area the church needed to "become" what they were not before. Paul obviously felt that the Philippians had a stain upon the life of the congregation. By allowing the schism to continue that left disgrace upon them and upon the Lord.

People outside Christ wrote them off. If Jesus Christ made such an impact on them why were they so divided? They lived in the midst of a "crooked and perverse generation." That generation will look on them with twisted eyes. They did not expect to hear anything good from the Philippian church. They viewed Christianity with skepticism and cynicism.

PRINCIPLE: Schism among Christians will reinforce skepticism cynicism among non-Christians.

APPLICATION: If our non-Christian neighbors were to examine our lives would we be open to censure from them? Is there a stain or something reprehensible in our testimony where they can use as an excuse not to receive Christ?

Having set forth four standards for Christians to overcome schism, Paul presents the reason why these criteria are necessary.

in the midst of a crooked and perverse generation

"Crooked" means that the non-Christian world does not hue to a straight line. They have no absolutes. They themselves do not have standards.

"Perverse" means twisted and distorted. Not only do they not have standards but they have perverted principles. They are unscrupulous.

The phrase "in the midst" indicates the believer's relationship to the world is insulation, not isolation. God does not want us isolated from the

world but insulated from its influence. We are in the world but we are not of the world.

among whom you shine as lights in the world

In a "crooked" and "perverse" world Christians should shine as lights. Darkness is where the light is needed. Therefore, Christians should not be religious recluses. God's sovereign plan is to use his people to reach distorted people.

An attitude which militates against sharing our faith is that people with twisted thinking will never be open to receive Christ. However, these are the very people, God's says, to whom we are to witness. The only light this world has is the believer. That is why it is so dark. "We are the best Christian some people know."

PRINCIPLE: The place for light is darkness where it is needed.

APPLICATION: Christians are called upon by God to shed luminosity as widely as possible. Are we daunted by darkness or are we challenged by it? The challenge of this passage is that we are to go into the teeth of a "crooked and perverse" generation with a transparent testimony.

Philippians 2:16

Holding fast the word of life, so that I may rejoice in the day of Christ that I have not run in vain or labored in vain.

Paul's main concern is that the Philippian church will not lose its testimony and impact on the non-Christian world. In verse 15 he said that we are to illumine the world like lights.

holding fast the word of life

"Holding fast" means give concentrated attention to. It also can mean "hold out" as a gift to the needy. This word was used in secular Greek for offering wine to a guest at a banquet. This is the offer of a message.

"The word of life" is the Word of God which produces life. It is the Word which produces life. It is a life-giving Word.

so that i may rejoice in the day of Christ

"The Day of Christ" refers to the day when we will meet the Lord when he comes again. One clear point of rejoicing in Scripture is at the judgment

seat of Christ. The point of joy will be how many people we have led to Christ. When all the records are presented then there will be joy.

that i have not run in vain or labored in vain

"That" is a result clause. We should be result oriented. Paul was. He kept a global view of his life in mind. He constantly looked to the end when he would meet the Lord. He was concerned about how the Lord would evaluate his life.

The Christian life is a race. The word "run" means run in a stadium in competition. What are we racing against? The word "vain" means empty. We are racing against an empty life, a wasted life.

The word "labored" means labor to the point of exhaustion, to the last ounce of strength. We can labor to the point of exhaustion yet still conclude our life in a vacuum.

PRINCIPLE: The believer should pursue results which pleases the Lord by offering the gospel on a platter.

APPLICATION: If we are to hold forth the Word of God we need to climb over our petty differences. We need to get on with the task. What other people think about us will not matter when we meet the Lord.

Philippians 2:17-18

Yes, and if I am being poured out as a drink offering on the sacrifice and service of your faith, I am glad and rejoice with you all. For the same reason you also be glad and rejoice with me.

In verses 17 and 18 Paul presents himself as a prototype of service. His desire to see the smile of the Lord Jesus at the judgment seat of Christ was the reason for this service. Sitting in a Roman jail he knew death as a martyr was a clear possibility for him.

yes, and if I am being poured out as a drink offering on the sacrifice and service of your faith

The words "poured out" means poured out as a libation. This is a figure from a sacrificial drink offering. He viewed his death as imminent.

Paul is saying that "if I lose my life here in Rome, it will be because of your faith." He was willing to

make whatever sacrifice necessary to advance their faith.

Whenever we give our lives to Christ our we give him the right to terminate it as it pleases him. We may live to eighty years of age or we may die at thirty. The choice is God's; that is his business.

The word "service" means "religious service." It was used of the high priestly work of Christ (Hebrews 8:2,6). We get our word liturgy from this Greek word. Our ministry for Christ is a liturgy for him.

I am glad and rejoice with you all. for the same reason you also be glad and rejoice with me.

Paul says, "if you hear that I am released, rejoice! If you hear that I have been executed, rejoice! It is the will of God that counts." There is no joy outside the will of God. Some of us have to learn that lesson the hard way.

PRINCIPLE: God has the right to our life and service.

APPLICATION: Eve wanted her will regardless of what the will of God was. She paid a terrible price for it. Some of us will pay a price for stepping out of the will of God. "I want her, I don't care what the will of God is! I don't give a hoot what the Bible says. I do not care whether this person is a Christian or not." Paul's was willing to die if necessary to do the will of God. A Spartan soldier's mother would say as she gave her son his shield would say, "Son, either this, or upon this." Either fight or be carried back on the shield.

Philippians 2:19

But I trust in the Lord Jesus to send Timothy to you shortly, that I also may be encouraged when I know your state.

At the end of chapter two Paul illustrates selflessness in the lives of people. His first portrayal is Timothy. He is set before us in verses 19-24.

But i trust in the Lord Jesus to send Timothy to you shortly

The Philippian church is in trouble; she is in danger of a split. So Paul is going to shortly send Timothy to investigate the problem.

That trip is a long hazardous round trip of over 2000 miles. Bandits plagued the highways and the

ships were not seaworthy. All that just to investigate the problem at Philippi. Paul's concern for the church was great.

Timothy was Paul's troubleshooter. Whenever there was a difficulty to which Paul could not attend personally he sent Timothy. Timothy was a vest pocket edition of the apostle Paul. "And the things that you have heard from me among many witnesses, commit these to faithful men who will be able to teach others also" (II Tim. 2:2). Two cases in point were Corinth and Thessalonica.

"For this reason I have sent Timothy to you, who is my beloved and faithful son in the Lord, who will remind you of my ways in Christ, as I teach everywhere in every church" (I Co. 4:17).

"Therefore, when we could no longer endure it, we thought is good to be left in Athens alone, and sent Timothy, our brother and minister of God, and our fellow laborer in the gospel of Christ to establish you and encourage you concerning your faith" (I Th. 3:1,2).

that I also may be encouraged when I know your state

When Timothy comes back Paul will know the status of the church. Paul says by implication, "I hope that Euodias and Syntyche would have buried the hatchet by then."

PRINCIPLE: It is important to mentor others to multiply our tasks.

APPLICATION: Is there a person or people in your life you are influencing to multiply your ministry? That is the way the gospel and other ministry spreads.

Philippians 2:20

For I have no one like-minded who will sincerely care for your state.

This verse is one of the most glowing tributes made to anyone in the New Testament. Timothy was well known in Philippi. He was with Paul on each of his three visits to that city.

For I have no one like-minded

The word "like-minded" means twin-souled, of equal soul. Paul could trust Timothy with the church at Philippi because his soul was so close to his own. Both desired the will of God.

Paul had let Timothy to Christ years before. He called him, "my son in the faith" and "my dearly beloved son." He was a son who became a leader in the cause of Christ.

Paul says of Timothy "But you, O man of God." Paul called him a man of God. It is proper to characterize people who have a heart for God.

who will sincerely care for your state

The word "sincerely" means genuinely, truly. Timothy had a genuine sense of responsibility. He was a straight shooter. He was a person you could count upon to get at the truth of the matter. Paul says, "I have no one so genuine, so real as Timothy. He will feed the sheep; he will not fleece the sheep."

"Your state" is your spiritual state. The church at Philippi was not in a good "state." They were divided. Timothy can resolve your schism.

PRINCIPLE: Leadership must fall upon point people with character, who are characterized as men or women of God.

APPLICATION: It is not what is on the label; it is what is inside that counts. We can lead in name only by our title or we can lead by character and responsibility. This young protégé of Paul was not impatient like most youth. He developed character at a young age. We live in a generation where leaders use the church for their own ends. They use the church for advancement, for money, for fame. Genuine leaders care for the state of people.

Philippians 2:21

For all seek their own, not the things which are of Christ Jesus.

Now we turn from a glowing tribute to a terrific indictment. Paul knew of no one who cared for people like Timothy. He was others oriented, not focused on self interests. But evidently the church at Rome was living in a "me generation."

For all seek their own

Years before his Roman imprisonment Paul wrote "First, I thank my God through Jesus Christ for you all, that your faith is spoken of throughout the whole world" (Rom. 1:8). At one time the Roman church was interested in others. They had a repu-

tion for sharing their faith. Now they could care less. They had lost their passion for others.

There was no one else that Paul could send to Philippi other than Timothy because everyone else was seeking their own interests. If Paul were to try to send someone else on that long hazardous journey they would have said "What do I get out of this? Are there any risks to me personally? What are the wages? What are the conditions?" They all seek their own. Their interest is not Jesus', it is their own.

They probably would have an interest "If it is convenient," only as it involves their spare time. If it does not cost anything, I will do it." This is Christianity as a sideline. It is not Christianity at the core.

Most people are interested in themselves, their advancement, their concerns. "And do you seek great things your yourself? Do not seek them" (Jer. 45:5).

not the things which are of Christ Jesus

This phrase means to put spiritual things first. If we put God first, he will provide, "But seek first the kingdom of God and His righteousness, and all these things shall be added to you" (Matt. 6:33).

PRINCIPLE: Selfishness preempts spiritual priority. To put priority on Jesus Christ is the essence of Christianity.

APPLICATION: Jesus Christ must come before our wives or husbands and children. Jesus Christ must come before our relationships and our jobs. This idea eliminates almost all Christians at the twenty first century. No wonder Christians have such a difficult time living the Christian life! We try to live it the hard way, "All seek their own, not the things which are of Christ Jesus." This is selfishness, one of the greatest obstructions to the Christian life. To put self first is to dethrone Christ, "If anyone desires to come after Me, let him deny himself, and take up his cross, and follow Me" (Matt. 16:24). How many of us are so dedicated to the person of Christ to place him before ourselves?

Philippians 2:22

But you know his proven character, that as a son with his father he served with me in the gospel.

Character is crucial in sports. If a player has character he has stability. People can count on him. He will persist through the tough times such as a losing streak. Here Paul talks about the character of Timothy. Here is a person who has proved himself. Paul could count on him; he will be there when the going gets tough.

But you know his proven character

The word "proven" means the state of being tried. This is a person who has been through the wars and has come out stronger. His integrity has proved true.

Timothy established himself as someone Paul could send to Philippi. He was dependable. When he gets there people can count on him to operate with integrity.

that as a son with his father

This is spiritual fatherhood and sonship. Timothy was wise enough to learn from a veteran missionary. As a son with a father he learned from Paul. He was open to allow his character to be guided. Paul taught him the Word and how to live it out when things were not going well.

he served with me in the gospel

Timothy help found the church at Philippi. As a vest pocket edition of the apostle Paul he learned how to serve with Paul in the gospel.

The phrase "in the gospel" means in getting the gospel out to the Roman world. Sharing your faith to a world who never heard of Christ is rough business. But he was willing to put himself on the line with all its risks and dangers. He cultivated character through trusting God in difficulty.

PRINCIPLE: Character comes over a period of time with the right kind of structure built into it.

APPLICATION: Character does not come by floating along in life with the flotsam and jetsam. Character comes by structuring into our lives events and situations that will demand that we grow beyond where we are. We love groves in life because they are secure. But by stepping out of

our little nitch we will stretch our boundaries of attributes. For example, many of never witness aggressively because of fear. To run from fear will lock us into the fear. To face fear is to master fear. If we put ourselves on the line we will find how God can work through us in spite of our frailties. With whom are you "serving in the gospel?"

Philippians 2:23-24

Therefore I hope to send him at once, as soon as I see how it goes with me. But I trust in the Lord that I myself shall also come shortly.

Here the apostle is able to dangle between two possible directions of God's will. For most of us there is insecurity in uncertainty. Yet Paul's security came from something other than knowing the future.

Therefore I hope to send him at once, as soon as I see how it goes with me

This is the first of the two options in God's will: send Timothy to Philippi. Paul is not certain whether he will be released from jail. Depending upon how his sentencing goes he will make his decision to send Timothy.

Paul previously said (v.19) that he was trusting the Lord to send Timothy to Philippi. He was trusting God both to send Timothy and for his release (next sentence).

but I trust in the Lord that I myself shall also come shortly

The word "trust" means to be persuaded. It is a verb of confidence, settled confidence. The tense of this verb means to have a state of trust. It is this kind of trust in the Lord that gives Paul stability.

Paul was willing to place himself in the hands of God. Whatever the will of God, he would go with that. If God releases him from prison he will go to Philippi to resolve the church conflict. If God decided to keep him in prison, he would send Timothy to Philippi. Paul operated on the principle "if the Lord wills."

The Scriptures do not reveal his release but he did receive his freedom. Later he was imprisoned again in Rome (where he wrote II Timothy).

PRINCIPLE: Paul's security is independent of circumstances and rests completely on God's will.

APPLICATION: Are you the kind of person that needs security almost at all costs? Do you work hard not to find yourself in uncertain situations? Paul was comfortable with uncertainty because he had complete confidence in how God was handling his life. What is the nature of your confidence in the Lord?

Philippians 2:25

Yet I considered it necessary to send to you Epaphroditus, my brother, fellow worker, and fellow soldier, but your messenger and the one who ministered to my need.

Chapter two of Philippians gives four examples of authentic biblical mental attitude. The first was the inimitable, matchless, peerless Lord Jesus. Then Paul turned to three lesser examples. First, he gives himself as an example, he was willing to pour himself out as sacrifice. Timothy was a selfless servant. Now he turns to Epaphroditus.

Yet I considered it necessary to send to you Epaphroditus

Epaphroditus only occurs twice in the Bible, here and 4:18. From verse 25 to 30 Paul presents one of the least known yet spiritually powerful men in the Bible. Even the venerated apostle Paul held him in high regard.

Epaphroditus probably came from a non-Christian background. His name means "belonging to Venus." Venus was a goddess. He may have been a polytheist (worshiper of many gods) before he became a Christian.

After he became a Christian he emerged into a leading member of the Philippian church, maybe even its pastor. He was charged to deliver a love gift to Paul (4:18) and to stay and help him (2:25,30).

On his trip and stay in Rome he became dangerously ill "for the work of Christ." He almost died (v.27). After his recovery Paul sent him back home. Upon his return he delivered the epistle to the Philippians.

PRINCIPLE: Here is another example of a person whose attitude was determined to serve others. He was willing to serve even to the point of death.

APPLICATION: It is one thing to hold a nice thought about serving others. It is another to hold

a conviction so deeply as to form an orientation, a bearing that is willing to not only to give, but to sacrifice for others.

Epaphroditus' name only occurs twice in the Bible (2:25; 4:18) yet he was chosen by Paul as a sterling example of someone who gives of himself.

Paul "sent" Timothy. Now Paul sees it necessary to "send" Epaphroditus. Paul was in the habit of sending people. He utilized people, multiplied people for ministry. Unleashing and facilitating people for ministry multiplies the cause of Christ.

my brother, fellow worker, and fellow soldier, but your messenger and the one who ministered to my need

Now Paul turns to a fivefold description of Epaphroditus. Like Paul and Timothy he is a man to be held up as a shining example of someone to imitate. This is a thumbnail sketch of how the apostle views this man.

MY BROTHER

Epaphroditus was viewed as a companion from a number of perspectives. First he is a brother. He had the same spiritual roots. That means God is our Father, Jesus our Savior and the Holy Spirit our comforter at the moment we exercise faith in Christ.

At the moment of conversion we become a child of God. God the Father is the creator of all people but he is not their Father. Only the Bible makes that distinction.

Paul saw Epaphroditus as a spiritual brother. That made their relationship distinct. There is a commonality among believers not found outside Christ. They are family with family prerogatives. Our flabby age of unprecedented latitude says "everyone is your brother." Our age loves to break down biblical distinctions. Yet the Bible talks about the sons of God and the sons of the Devil.

Paul viewed Epaphroditus primarily as a brother, not as a fellow churchman. Church connection was not what made this affinity. Christ was the bond which united them in the same spiritual league. "For you are all sons of God through faith in Christ Jesus" (Gal. 3:26).

PRINCIPLE: Fellow Christians are to be held in a unique place in our hearts as people bound together around Christ.

APPLICATION: Do we view fellow Christians as acquaintances and other members of the human race? Do we picture them as family members who hold special place in our hearts? Fellow Christians are to have a special place in our hearts because of our joint connection to Christ.

The second of five descriptions of Epaphroditus, a selfless servant, is "fellow worker."

FELLOW WORKER

Epaphroditus was a made who was not afraid of work. Someone has said that there are two kinds of work among Christians. Those who are willing to work and those who are willing to let them work! "Well, I am going to serve Jesus Christ as soon as my children are grown." By then you will have less to contribute and be burdened with entrenched patterns of selfish living.

Paul viewed this man as a companion in labor for Jesus Christ. People who serve the Lord together have a special fellowship:

"For we are God's fellow workers" (I Co. 3:9).

When God called Paul into ministry he challenged him with "work," "Now separate to Me Barnabas and Saul for the work to which I have called them" (Acts 13:2). Note the sequel, "From there they sailed to Antioch, where they had been commended to the grace of God for the work which they had completed" (14:26).

At the commencement of the second missionary expedition Paul did not take John Mark to "the work," "But Paul insisted that they should not take with them the one who had departed from them in Pamphylia, and had not gone with them to the work" (15:38). John Mark did not take the work of Christ seriously. Paul did not bear half committed team members.

To some Christians almost anything comes before the work of Christ. But the Bible stresses the importance of work for the Lord, "Therefore, my beloved brethren, be steadfast, immovable, always abounding the work of the Lord, knowing that your labor is not in vain in the Lord" (I Co. 15:58). There are two qualifications to the work of the

Lord: time and dynamic. The time is "always" and the dynamic is "abounding."

PRINCIPLE: The work ethic is indeed biblical! It takes great effort to execute God's plan for the believer in time.

APPLICATION: To most Christians their church or ministry is just a hobby. They do not take it seriously. "If it is convenient, if I have time, I will give a squirt of time and two squirts of money to the Lord's work." Clearly, ministry "work" is in God's plan. We live in a day where this perspective is under assault. As a result never have so many owed so much to so few. Very few churches have more than 20% of their people involved in ministry.

The third report Paul gave of Epaphroditus was that he was a "co-soldier" to the apostle.

AND FELLOW SOLDIER

Paul says, "Epaphroditus and I were in the same spiritual outfit. We slogged through the spiritual mud together; we slugged it out with the enemy together; we were in sick bay together; we went through the war together."

Some Christians act surprised when they end up in spiritual war. Alas, many Christians do not even engage the enemy. The battle is raging and they are sitting off in the hills where there is little danger. They care little for the consequence of who will win. The impact may be disastrous for the cause of Christ but they are off in lala land.

Granted, not all belong at or are fitted for the front lines. Some should be in the supply lines, others support for those who are flying the jets. But everyone should be a soldier, not a sitter, a soldier.

The Christian life is a war. We have a great enemy. He is powerful and his troops are many and well trained. To hold no defense against that force is calamitous to the Christian cause.

There are many metaphors of soldiering in the Bible.

"This charge I commit to you, son Timothy, according to the prophecies previously made concerning you, that by them you may wage the good warfare" (I Tim. 1:18).

"Fight the good fight of faith" (I Tim. 6:12).

"You therefore must endure hardship as a good soldier of Jesus Christ" (II Tim. 2:3).

We operate on three fronts: the world, the flesh and the devil. We need to know both ourselves and the enemy. In the book *The Art of War* makes that point, "If you know yourself and your enemy, you need not fear the results of a 100 battles. If you know yourself but not your enemy for every victory gained you will suffer one defeat."

PRINCIPLE: We cannot call every believer a "fellow (co) soldier." Only those engaged in spiritual warfare can be called that.

APPLICATION: Only those who are actively engaged in spiritual war we can genuinely call soldiers. That is, those who are employed winning people to Christ, caring for the spiritually wounded, giving support to the troops on the front lines (missionaries, preachers, lay leaders). When Satan attacks us personally we must put on our spiritual armor. This involves both defensive (spirituality) and offensive measures (advancing the cause of Christ). Are we at the center of the spiritual battle? Do we view ourselves as engaged in a spiritual war?

The fourth portrait Paul presents of Epaphroditus is that he was "your messenger."

BUT YOUR MESSENGER

Epaphroditus was the messenger of the church at Philippi to Paul. The word "messenger" in the Greek is the word "apostle." He was not an apostle of the Lord but an apostle of the church at Philippi. He was a representative of the church at Philippi to find the apostle Paul and help him.

Notice the only other place where Epaphroditus' name occurs, "I am full, having received from Epaphroditus the things sent from you, a sweet-smelling aroma, an acceptable sacrifice, well pleasing to God" (4:18). This man was an ambassador of the local church to help a missionary in a difficult situation.

We are both representatives of the Lord and of his church. The emphasis of one to the neglect of the other is an error. There are some who think that they are representatives of Christ but do not think that they are representatives of the church. Their attitude is "let the church be hanged! Put the church on the shelf. It is no longer relevant in

winning people for Christ." They put almost everything before the ministry of the local church.

God has called us to be representatives of both the Lord and his church. To emphasize only one side of that truth is to distort the biblical perspective. We get off on a tangent if we do not emphasize all aspects of that truth. Tending all the truth keeps us from becoming lopsided. We will not limp on the right side or the left.

PRINCIPLE: The balance of God's truth is that God has called every believer to be a representative of the church as well as a representative of the Lord.

APPLICATION: Are you involved in a local church ministry? In business dealings do you view yourself as representing both the Lord Jesus and his local church?

The fifth and final characterization of Epaphroditus is that he cared for needs. Winston Churchill twitted one of his political opponents with "He has the genius for compressing a minimum of thought into a maximum of words." By contrast, Paul compressed a few telling words to reveal the genius of Epaphroditus.

AND THE ONE WHO MINISTERED TO MY NEED

Epaphroditus took it upon himself to care for the Paul. His ministry was to care. Paul in effect says, "He cared for me here in prison. Oh how he met my need. I was at the mercy of the Roman government who does not provide food or clothing in prison. He came and met those needs."

The word "ministered" means pertaining to public service. It was used especially of ministering in the temple. It is the word from which we get our English word liturgy. The upshot of this word is that Epaphroditus gave himself publicly to serve Paul.

The word "need" in the Greek means service, advantage and use. It came to mean that which is needed for use or service: want or need. Whether physical or spiritual needs, Epaphroditus met them all. He was a giving person. He brought an offering from the Philippian church but his ministry was more than that. He stayed in Rome to meet whatever need Paul may have. He probably conveyed messages to believers in Rome and

made contact with Roman authorities for Paul. Paul sent him on evangelistic missions. Finally, he carried the book of Philippians back to Philippi in Greece. His ministry was to take care of little things.

While little is written about Epaphroditus he was of immense support to the greatest missionary of the first century. While he never swayed multitudes, he could carry a briefcase. He toiled unappreciated, unsung yet faithful in his sphere of service.

PRINCIPLE: All God requires of us is to do what we can with what we have. God has a plan for those minister with little things.

APPLICATION: Do you diminish the little things you do for God? Paul could have never had the ministry he did without an Epaphroditus. Your support for others is strategic in God's economy. Can the eye say to the hand I have no need of you? This ministry is greatly needed in God's strategy. Because your name does not get in the church bulletin is your ministry any less in God's eyes?

Philippians 2:26

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

Epaphroditus was of great service to Paul while he was in prison but he grieved for his congregation back in Philippi.

Since he was longing for you all

Here is another glimpse into the heart of Epaphroditus. He cared for people. He could not wait to see his congregation again. He was homesick.

The Philippian church must have been some church. Paul wanted to go back and Epaphroditus longed to see them again. When a church is what God designed it to be people love to be there. It is the people in the congregation that makes the atmosphere of the church. People who are proud of and happy in their church will attract others. The esprit de corps of a congregation is an essential factor in its growth. That is probably the most overlooked factor in church growth. In other words, it is the people that makes the difference between a cold church and a warm church.

The esprit de corps comes primarily from the people, not the pastor. Obviously the pastor makes a significant contribution. Neither is it the music, although music is important in forming an atmosphere. If the people of the congregation cluster in little huddles when newcomers come no matter what the service is like the church will be deemed a "cold church." If the people do not smile and offer a warm hand shake strangers will feel like aliens.

And was distressed because you had heard that he was sick

The word "distressed" means grief, sorrow. Epaphroditus was grieving over the church back home.

Notice that his grief was for them, not himself, because he had been sick. Now there is a switch! Most of us would have grieved if no one had heard we were sick. "No one sent me a card, no one cares. How sorrow I feel for myself. How I grieve for myself. No one cares about me I don't think that I will go to that church again." That is how most of us would think. Not Epaphroditus. He did not want to worry the Philippians. His care anticipated their hurt for him. He did not want to cause any undue anxiety for them.

PRINCIPLE: The argument of chapter 2 is selflessness. The believer should be so oriented to others that he not only thinks about others but longs for them. We should care more about others than about ourselves. In this passage the context is church life.

APPLICATION: Are we unfriendly? Do we neglect to talk to new people? If we are so busy with our own crowd that we do not involve ourselves with others, we contribute to the frigidity of our church. "That is a cold church, I have been here for four weeks and no one has talked to me yet." Do you care about others? Do you take an interest in others? If you do it will make a big difference to your church.

Philippians 2:27

For indeed he was sick almost unto death, but God had mercy on him, and not only on him but on me also, lest I should have sorrow upon sorrow.

God's mercy extends to many categories. Here it is to Epaphroditus' physical health.

For indeed he was sick almost unto death

Epaphroditus was with Paul a long time. He was sick in Rome. The news traveled back to Philippi which took months and traveled back again to Rome. Their friendship was long and faithful.

The word "almost" is a nautical term for a ship coming along side a dock. Death was about to come along side. He was on the point of death.

Paul tells the Philippian church that "Epaphroditus almost died on me." But why did not Paul heal him? He was sick to the point of death. "Trophimus have I left at Miletus sick" (II Tim. 4:20). It was God's will for Epaphroditus to be sick. God some of his greatest grace in illness. Lazarus' sickness was for the glory of God, "This sickness is not unto death, but for the glory of God, that the Son of God may be glorified through it" (John 11:4).

PRINCIPLE: God is glorified in more than success, he is glorified in adversity.

APPLICATION: Do we resent our set backs? Or do we look upon adversity as an opportunity to glorify God? When our business fails or we lose our health, do we show the greatness and glory of how God can take us through it?

The next phrase of verse 27 is one of those great "but God's" of the New Testament. Each time a "but God" occurs it transforms the situation. Whenever we need mercy from God we need to look for the "but God."

But God had mercy on him

"But" in the Greek is a strong term of contrast. Epaphroditus was almost at the point of death—but God. God was the source of his healing. This healing was directly from God. No other agent was involved. Paul did not heal him. Evidently Paul could not heal him. God intervened directly from his sovereignty.

This "but God" has to do with physical healing. God sustained him physically. He almost died. Another "but God" which is associated with "mercy" correlates with our spiritual condition, "But God, who is rich in mercy, because of His great love with which He loved us" (Eph. 2:4). The previous verses describes our desperate spiritual state then verse 4 says, "But God." God turned the situation around.

Not only on him but on me also, lest I should have sorrow upon sorrow

It was bad enough for Paul to be imprisoned in a rat infested jail with no blankets, food or clothes. But if Epaphroditus died he would suffer yet another heavy burden. He might of even thought it was his own fault.

But when God healed Epaphroditus it was a mercy on Paul as well. God did not let sorrow stack upon sorrow. God does not allow us to carry burdens more than we can bear.

PRINCIPLE: God will never allow us to be put into a situation too heavy for us to bear.

APPLICATION: Do we trust God to manage the adversity which come into our lives? Can we trust him to know when the load is too heavy? Do we believe that God is a God of mercy? Can we trust God to exercise that mercy when it is necessary? This verse is a praise to God for showing mercy in healing one man and emotional mercy to another. Do we trust God for both kinds of mercy?

Philippians 2:28

Therefore I sent him the more eagerly, that when you see him again you may rejoice, and I may be less sorrowful.

Paul had the capacity for great empathy. Empathy, as over against sympathy, is the ability to identify with the pathos (passions) of others. It is the faculty to put yourself in the place of another and consider their state of affairs.

Therefore I sent him the more eagerly

"Therefore" means as the result of God's merciful healing of Epaphroditus. The Philippians are going to have their leader and friend back.

Because of the pain the Philippians felt for Epaphroditus' illness, Paul sent him back "the more eagerly." His eagerness was not because of his desire to get rid of Epaphroditus. That would have been to his own detriment. His eagerness had to do with his empathy for them.

Empathy is not sympathy. Sympathy is simply feeling the emotions of another person. Empathy is the ability to identify with the state of the other person. Paul put himself in the place of the Philippians. By doing so he acted unselfishly. He sent

back someone very important to him. Empathy is a sign someone is thinking of others and cares for others.

That when you see him again you may rejoice

It will be a great day when Epaphroditus walks into the Philippians church after being gone for so long and after almost losing his life. They thought he was dying and then he shows up in church!

Beyond that, he will carry a letter (an epistle) which will become part of the Word of God. Paul anticipates great joy on their part when Epaphroditus comes home. Imagine sitting in that church when Epaphroditus read the epistle to them. What joy that must have been.

And I may be less sorrowful

There is something in this that will serve Paul. It is not something for him personally. Paul will be served by knowing the Philippian church will be comforted by Epaphroditus' coming. In other words, Paul's concern was not for himself but for the Philippian church. "I will be less sorrowful to know that he arrived safely back in Philippi."

PRINCIPLE: Empathy is a principle of selflessness. A person who shows capacity for empathy means they think seriously about others.

APPLICATION: How much time do you think about the plight of others in your sphere of influence? Do you care enough about them to put yourself in their place? Do you identify with their hurt? Do you act upon your understanding?

Philippians 2:29

Receive him therefore in the Lord with all gladness and hold such men in esteem.

Because of the litany of scandal among Christian leaders in recent years, respect for the offices of ministry has plummeted. This nosedive has hurt the cause of Christ. How can we restore trust again? How are we to think about this tension between trust in leadership and the possibility of being burned again?

Receive him therefore in the Lord with all gladness

Paul is sent Epaphroditus back to Philippi with the epistle to the Philippians. Upon his arrival

Paul challenges the Philippians to hold this man in deference.

The word "receive" means to receive kindly, to admit as a host. "When Epaphroditus comes back-host him." This word means to welcome with open arms. "Treat him as a guest. Treat him with respect."

They were to receive him "in the Lord." This man represents the Lord Jesus Christ. He is part of the body of Christ.

"With all gladness" is a phrase of joy. Paul identifies the attitude the church should have toward him when he returns. The word "gladness" is literally the word "joy."

And hold such men in esteem

The word "hold" means to have and hold implying continued holding and lasting possession. "Do not let your esteem falter. Keep as a lasting possession your honor of this man. Preserve your respect and esteem for him."

"Esteem" is honor, value. This man is to be valued and cherished. The next verse tells us why we should hold such a man in high regard. He was to receive esteem because of what he did, not for who he was.

How are Christians to think about leadership in an age of scandal? There is a tendency to throw a blanket of suspicion over all leaders when a leader falls. This is obviously a distortion and unfair to faithful leaders. It is our insecurity which drives this warp of what should be right thinking.

However, on the other hand, Christians naiveté of leadership is no Christian value either. Any leader can fall given the right circumstances and timing in his life. That is reality. To put leadership on a pedestal is not realistic. There are leaders who are faithful. They have earned respect and should be honored for it. "And we urge you, brethren, to recognize those who labor among you, and are over you in the Lord and admonish you, and to esteem them very highly in love for their works sake" (I Thessalonians 5:12-13). No leader can lead without respect and honor. That honor is not for his sake but for the ministry sake.

PRINCIPLE: The work of Jesus Christ cannot advance without respect for the office a leader holds.

APPLICATION: Are you in the process of undermining a Christian leader? If you are, you are attacking the work of Christ. If a leader is not credible we should be careful not to undermine the ministry while addressing the person. Positively, we should hold our leaders in deference, respect and honor. Without it, they cannot lead the cause of Christ vigorously.

Philippians 2:30

Because for the work of Christ he came close to death, not regarding his life, to supply what was lacking in your service toward me.

Not many of us will kill ourselves working for the Lord. In this verse we meet a man who almost died serving the Lord.

Because for the work of Christ he came close to death

Ephroditus was like the apostle Paul. He risked his life for the Lord Jesus: "But none of these things move me; nor do I count my life dear to myself, so that I may finish my race with joy, and the ministry which I received from the Lord Jesus, to testify to the gospel of the grace of God" (Acts 20:24). Paul predetermined in his mind to be willing to die for Christ: "For I am ready, not only to be bound (put in prison), but also to die at Jerusalem for the name of the Lord Jesus" (21:13). Paul and Barnabas are described as "Men who have risked their lives for the name of our Lord Jesus Christ" (15:26).

Ephroditus almost worked himself to death for the Lord Jesus. Today, we have many excuses for not serving the Lord: "I must take care of my family," "I have to put in many hours at work." These are standard, stock excuses. "If I have any time on the outer fringe of my time, I will give it to the Lord." "If I have any spare time I will give it to the Lord. But I rarely have any spare time though." "As soon as I retire, as soon as I am a little more healthy, I will serve God." When we retire we will be too worn out to serve him.

not regarding his life

"Not regarding his life" means that he had the "No Fear" philosophy. He gambled his life for the cause of Christ. His stake was his own life. The Greek indicates he did this before coming near to

death. He did not fear death before he fell sick. When his sickness became so severe that he almost died, he had no fear then either.

To supply what was lacking in your service toward me

Ephroditus went from Philippi to Rome to minister to Paul. The entire Philippian church could not come so they sent one of their leaders. He willingly risked his life for that cause.

"Toward me" is literally "face to face with me." He personally served the Lord by serving me.

PRINCIPLE: If we do not serve the Lord because of fear when things are going right, we certainly will not serve the Lord under duress. If we are not afraid of death now, we will not fear any disaster that may come our way. We can serve the Lord with abandon. We will throw down our lives down as a stake. We will ante up our lives for the Lord.

APPLICATION: If the Lord comes the opportunity to serve him will be gone. We might have to say to the Lord: "Well Lord, you came too soon, I did not expect you this quickly. I had good intentions but..." It may be over sooner than we think. When he comes we will "settle up." He will ask, "When did you receive me as your Savior? You have been a Christian a long time. Let us look at your service record." "Oh Lord, I didn't know you were so serious about serving you!" People who are serious about serving the Lord serve him with abandon. They do not count the cost.

Philippians, Chapter Three

Philippians 3:1

Finally, my brethren, rejoice in the Lord. For me to write the same things to you is not tedious, but for you it is safe.

Chapter 3 begins a series of exhortations to live the Christian life. The first exhortation challenges believers to place no confidence in the flesh (3:1-14).

Finally, my brethren, rejoice in the Lord

Before imploring the Philippians to not deposit confidence in the flesh, he charges them to "Rejoice in the Lord." Rejoice is a theme of the epistle.

Evidently the Philippians needed to develop a joy orientation. Paul comes back to this over and over.

Christians today require this challenge often. Discouragement makes headway easily. Yet joy in the Lord is quickly defeats discouragement. Steering attention toward him rather than toward our circumstances releases focus upon problems.

PRINCIPLE: To change the focus of our orientation is the principle of displacement. If the nucleus of our thinking is upon failure, failure becomes our orientation. If we change the core of our thinking to contemplate the Lord, he becomes our ambition. Whether success comes our way grows more irrelevant to us. If we place the Lord at the center point of our thinking lesser things seem trivial.

APPLICATION: The prevailing philosophy among Christians is "If you are healthy, I'm happy," "When everything is going right and coming up roses, I'm happy." However, when reverses prevail, that happiness evaporates. When we are misunderstood and not appreciated, can we rejoice then? If we rest our orientation toward life on perpetual positive circumstances, we put ourselves in a desperate situation. We cannot rejoice in our circumstances all the time but we can rejoice in our Lord ceaselessly (4:4). If we displace joy in the Lord for the hope of ongoing stable circumstance, vulnerability to changing conditions no longer disrupt our balance.

For me to write the same things to you is not tedious

"To write the same things" is repetition. When Paul was in Philippi he had divulged to them many of the same points in the book of Philippians at that time.

The word "tedious" means slow, tardy or slothful. Repetition is a drag. To go back over truth again and again is to plod and slog slowly through detail. Most people consider this drab, dull and monotonous. Paul calls it "safe." He says, "I never tire of telling you to focus on the Lord. I do not weary to remind you that source of your joy is the Lord." That is not tedious; it is safe.

We know so much more than we ever live. We hear so much more than we ever believe. Repetition is indispensable to implant truth into life.

"For precept must be upon precept, precept upon precept, Line upon line, line upon line, Here a little, there a little" (Isaiah 28:10).

That is the way we learn. Growth is a process. Cultivation of truth entails many applications to life.

A veteran pastor said, "When I first began to preach I was so afraid to repeat myself. Now I am afraid I won't!" How much of a message do people understand? How much do they retain? Would they recognize it if they heard it in a slightly different form?

But for you it is safe

The word "safe" means firm, fixed, immovable. Repetition is a safe precaution. It keeps people from falling and affords safety and support. Those who communicate truth must go over it again and again to impart it in a way that will make its reality stick. If they inculcate the Word it will have greater likelihood of permanence.

Peter carried the same philosophy of ministry,

"For this reason I will not be negligent to remind you always of these things, though you know and are established in the present truth.

Yes, I think it is right, as long as I am in this tent, to stir you up by reminding you" (II Peter 1:12,13).

PRINCIPLE: Repetition of the application of truth affords stability to living out the Christian life.

APPLICATION: If we lived as much Bible as we have learned, the quality of our Christian lives would be dramatically different. We know what is right, we live what is wrong. We are willfully blind to translate truth into experience. For many of us truth is an intellectual exercise, not a life condition. For truth to be transposed into our lives it demands many applications. Do you have enough truth to apply? Is truth real in your heart?

Philippians 3:2

Beware of dogs, beware of evil workers, beware of the mutilation!

"Beware of dogs, beware of evil workers, beware of the mutilation!"

The first part of this chapter contrasts man's righteousness and God's righteousness. In himself, man has no righteousness before God. Man's spiri-

tual bankruptcy is rooted in the essence of God. God's essence is absolute. He is 100% righteous. Man cannot attain 99.9% righteousness and relate to an absolute God. Any attempt, therefore, to measure up to God's righteousness by man's righteousness ends in a veto by God.

Present day fashionable religion is operation bootstraps--man's attempts to please God by his righteousness rather than through Jesus' death upon the cross. This is why the three bewarees of this verse surface at this point in the epistle.

We have all seen signs on the front fence "Beware of Dogs." In that case literal dogs are in view. This is not a command to beware of animals. Here the dogs is a metaphor for false teachers. The dogs in the first part of the verse are similar to "evil workers" and "the mutilation" of the latter part of the verse. These three categories are all people.

They are called dogs because they act like dogs. Dogs were not pets in the first century. They were a hated animal. Man's best friend in our day was an enemy in that day. The dog was a pariah. It ranged through the streets, often in packs, rummaging through garbage. They were vicious snapping and snarling at anyone who came close. They were not domestic animals. The dog to the first century person was a low life.

As a dog tears and devours so false teachers tear and devour the work of Christ. They attempted to consume his work of grace.

False teachers are brutes. They are animal-like. People who put God in their debt are brute beasts, dogs who savagely attack those who live by the grace of God.

PRINCIPLE: It is the nature of some people to reject the grace of God. Not only to they repudiate grace but they attack those who live by it. They attack grace with vicious legalism.

APPLICATION: False teachers try to influence Christians to live in the streets with them eating garbage. In packs they attack passer byes. Are you intimidated to not live by grace? Do you feel you must go back to some form of works to gain God's approval? Are you free to rest solely upon the work of Christ, not only for salvation, but the Christian life? "Dogs" would love for you to live in the streets with them. They would enjoy your

presence in the garbage dumps of legalism if you would just join them. Beware!

Three descriptions of false teachers surface in verse two. We have already examined "Beware of dogs." All three portraits involve false teachers. A warning is given for each characterization--"Beware."

BEWARE OF EVIL WORKERS

The second description of false teachers is that they are evil workers. They were religious workers. Their religion was deceitful work. It was deceitful because it distorted the true gospel and Christian life. Paul again calls religious workers deceitful,

"For such are false apostles, deceitful workers, transforming themselves into the apostles of Jesus Christ" (II Cor. 11:13).

Their legalism was an evil work. It was a facade for a real relationship with the Lord. They were absorbed in self righteousness and human effort. They work hard at enslaving others into their chains of pride. Pride corrupted their work. This is a warning against the legalistic message.

BEWARE OF THE MUTILATION

This phrase reveals the message of these false teachers. The mutilation is a reference to circumcision. The word "mutilation" comes from two words, "to cut" and "down." It means to cut off. This probably means the removal of the foreskin. Paul is using this phrase contemptuously for the Jewish circumcision in contrast to true spiritual circumcision of the heart (v.3).

The Word of God views any form of legalism as "dogs", "evil work" and "mutilation." Legalism is self effort verses God's effort. It glories in the energy of the flesh and the endeavors of man. It mutilates the Christian way of life. The grace of God glorifies God because God does the doing.

"As many as desire to make a good showing in the flesh, these would compel you to be circumcised" (Gal. 6:12).

PRINCIPLE: Legalism is no benign tumor. It is a cancerous tumor which will terminate a dynamic spiritual life. Beware!

APPLICATION: Are you caught up in what you offer God? Are you impressed with yourself? Do you view yourself as a spiritual superstar? Are you loaded with rules which make you look good? Are you out to impress others? Beware! Self righteousness plunders a powerful Christian life which looks to God to provide in grace.

Philippians 3:3

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

The legalistic and the grace ways of life are polar opposites. The reason for such rough language in verse two is because of the dangerous impact of legalism on the Christian approach to life. An alarm, a summons to vigilance is in order (v.2). A danger threatens the very essence of Christianity.

The thesis that we are to earn credit with God by works negates the grace principle. It puts God in man's debt. God becomes obligated to man because of all his deeds. The grace principle, however, sets forth the thesis that God makes the provisions and enablement for the Christian life.

This verse gives three hallmarks of those who are born again.

For we are the circumcision

Paul accepts circumcision but only a certain kind. It is a circumcision of the heart rather than the penis. It is spiritual rather than physical. The Judaizers believed in ritual. They made a virtue of a ritual. Their religious ritual was the physical act of circumcision.

Christianity is spiritual circumcision, not physical. Spiritual circumcision is part of our status before God eternally, "In Him you were also circumcised with the circumcision made without hands, by putting off the body of the sins of the flesh, by the circumcision of Christ (that is, the circumcision which Christ made to us on the cross)" (Col. 2:11).

Who worship God in the spirit

This is the first earmark of a Christian: he worships God. The Lord Jesus mentioned this in John 4:24, "God is Spirit, and those who worship Him must worship in spirit and truth." The Holy Spirit is in charge of the worship department. Genuine worship ties to dynamic fellowship with

the Holy Spirit. We are poor worshipers because we relate so poorly to the Holy Spirit.

Worship in genuine Christianity is in the Spirit. It is inward, not outward. Outward form does not constitute true worship. Worship is love. We do not worship well because we do not love well. To love God is to adore him, magnify him, praise and honor him. It is to give him first place.

PRINCIPLE: True worship centers is a genuine relationship with God.

APPLICATION: Do you worship God? "Well, he knows that I love him." That is what men say to their wives, "She knows that I love her." Yes, she wants to hear it over and over. "I have not told my wife in years but she knows I love her." But, how does she know it? Does she read minds? By the same token we do not such good worshipers either.

After contrasting legalism with the grace way of life in the first two statements, Paul turns to who statements which amplify "worship God in the Spirit:" 1. Rejoice in Christ Jesus, 2. Have no confidence in the flesh.

Rejoice in Christ Jesus

The theme of rejoicing in the Lord never becomes tiresome to Paul. Celebrating Jesus' person and work was a conspicuous characteristic of his dynamic life. Though he faced a mountain of trials and confronted with major problems, he never lost sight of the Lord.

The word "rejoice" means to speak loud, vaunt oneself, brag or even boast, glory or exult. This term is used both in a good and a bad sense in the New Testament. Here it is used in the good sense.

The phrase "in Christ Jesus" indicates our position before God in Christ. It is our status in God's eyes. Our status is the same as that of Jesus Christ. He is perfect righteousness, so we are perfect righteousness in our position (not in our experience) before God. This is a statement which counters legalism. Legalism tries to impress God by what man does. Grace accepts the provision of God by what Jesus Christ has done. These two viewpoints are radical opposites. The focal point of grace is Jesus Christ. Our rejoicing has its focal point in him, not in our ability to live up to God's expectations.

Our boast is not in ourselves; it is in Jesus Christ and his work. The reason for the three “beware’s” of verse two is that it minimizes the work of Christ and maximizes the work of the believer. We do not “brag” about ourselves we “brag” about Jesus Christ; we do not “glory” in ourselves; we “glory in Christ Jesus.”

And have no confidence in the flesh

The word for “no” is a strong term in the Greek. Those who live by grace do not have an ounce of confidence in the flesh. Paul was not persuaded that the flesh could earn any credit in God’s eyes. Both his salvation and Christian walk were dependent upon the grace of God.

The “flesh” is our sin capacity. There is nothing in the flesh that can impress God. There is nothing intrinsically in us that God wants or can use. That is difficult to take. It injures our pride. We chafe because we believe somehow we can earn credit before God. We have the idea that God should be impressed that we are Christians and living the Christian life. No, the only person God is impressed with is Jesus Christ. That is why we “rejoice in Christ Jesus.” God places no higher value on a Christian’s “flesh” than on a non-Christian’s “flesh.” Paul began this verse with “We are the circumcision.” The flesh has been circumcised positionally in Christ.

The flesh never gets better. It never improves. As well, our position in Christ never improves. Ours standing before God in Christ is perfect from the moment we receive Christ. That is why we rejoice in him. Even after years of godly living the flesh is not one whit better than the day we became a Christian. God can only be glorified by Christ Jesus.

PRINCIPLE: God is always glorified by what Christ has done, not by what we have done. That is why we “rejoice in Christ Jesus.”

APPLICATION: Christian should have “no” confidence in the flesh. God did not say “little.” No, less that a little--none. God bypasses it totally. God gives us a new capacity but he never improves the old one. He does not squirt perfume on the sin capacity, convert it or refine it. So why should we be in the business of trying to improve

the sin capacity? Our focus should not be on the flesh but on Jesus Christ and his work.

Contrary to much to today’s Christianity which places so much emphasis upon “self image” and “reaching your potential,” God declares not to trust the flesh. On the contrary, we are to reach outside ourselves to trust in, put confidence in, lean upon, rejoice in the Lord. Is self improvement or the Lord your focal point?

We are not to rejoice in friends for they prove untrue. We should not rejoice in good grades or business success because it is not possible to live an ideal life. As Paul’s life was filled with trouble so every Christian will face many reverses. An orientation which expects perfection will only find it in Christ. All other pursuits of life drop away to those are Christ oriented. A flash light is no longer needed in the mid-day sun.

Philippians 3:4

Though I also might have confidence in the flesh. If anyone else thinks he may have confidence in the flesh, I more so.

In this section of Philippians Paul gives a stirring personal testimony. He uses the perpendicular personal pronoun “I” 15 times. His testimony is also given in Acts 9, 22, 26; I Corinthians 9, II Corinthians 11; and Romans 7. He is trying to make it clear that this is truth he not only learned but he lived. He has gone down the road of legalism like no one else.

Paul turns to an autobiography to prove that he does not operate in the flesh. He lists a litany of accomplishments where he could have placed his confidence. For years that is exactly where he did put his confidence. Now that he has come to Christ, he views his religious career in legalism as a pile of dung! He threw his scrap book on the manure pile! The accomplishments of legalism smells like garbage, or even worse--like dung.

Though I also might have confidence in the flesh

To counteract the thought that maybe, just maybe, there is something in the flesh we can trust, Paul gives himself as an example. Before he became a Christian he made great strides in legalism. If there ever was a legalist, he was one.

In the Christian life we are often tempted to live within our own thin spiritual resources. We lean on our prayer life as such, not on God. We take courage by our activities, not in God. We rely on the mechanics of our spiritual life, rather than upon God. We renounce sin and make strong commitments of discipline and live in our own strength. Anything and everything but God! We try ecstasies, asceticism, tabooism, self discipline, all to no avail. Paul tried all these. He might have placed confidence in them, but he gave the flesh a vote of no confidence.

If anyone else thinks he may have confidence in the flesh, I more so

Paul, above all, had pursued that approach to life. If anyone thinks that they are impressing God on the basis of their religious record, they will not outpace Paul. He had an outstanding religious career.

PRINCIPLE: Religion, legalism and self effort will all fail us. We can only trust mutually exclusively in the provisions of Christ to live the Christian life.

APPLICATION: It is very difficult for us to accept that God will not accept the works of the flesh. We revert into self competence at the slightest bump in the road. The most subtle form of legalism appears in our spiritual life. We think that if we pray more, witness to a great number of people or mechanically live the Spirit filled life, we will succeed spiritually. Obviously, we cannot have a dynamic spiritual life without these means. But if we confuse means with end calamity can come to our Christian life. Morality is not the same as spirituality. Morality is man oriented. Spirituality is God oriented. How would you describe your Christian life? Is it religion, legalism oriented? Or, is it dependent upon the provisions of God?

Philippians 3:5

Circumcised the eighth day, of the stock of Israel, of the tribe of Benjamin, a Hebrew of the Hebrews; concerning the law, a Pharisee.

In verse 4 Paul made the point that when it comes to confidence in the flesh, he had an outstanding religious career. In this verse he delineates and documents his successes.

Circumcised the eighth day

Verses 5 and 6 catalog seven items he once thought were his assets. He believed that these things would impress God. When he met the Savior he found they were liabilities. Here he sets the ledger straight.

On one side of the ledger he documents the seven so called assets he thought would recommend him to God. On the other side is Jesus Christ. He traded all his assets for Jesus Christ. This is a radical about face. An outstanding religionist turned Christian. It is probably more difficult for religionists to become Christians than irreligious people. Belief in their legalism is too big a mountain for them to scale. Some think that because they have never murdered anyone or stole anything, big anyway, that must impress God somehow.

Item number one is "circumcised the eighth day." His first asset of religion was when he was eight days old. Right off at the beginning of his life he was conferred with religion. The eighth day was the day stipulated by the Old Testament law for a young boy to be circumcised. Circumcision was the external sign of the Abrahamic covenant (Genesis 17) which shows attachment to God in covenant relationship. He was circumcised within the prescriptions of the Old Testament. Both John the Baptist and Jesus were circumcised the eighth day (Luke 1:59; 2:21) just as the law demanded. Many people feel that if they just follow the rules of the Bible they will stand tall in God's sight. The rite of religion is a mechanism. Mechanisms do not influence God. Confirmation, christening, baptism, the Lord's supper in themselves do not impress God. It is the personal relationship with God that means something.

Many people to whom Paul wrote were Jewish converts. They were circumcised late in life. They were not circumcised on the eighth day. Paul, in contrast to them, was circumcised on the prescribed day. Technically, Paul was more religious than they were.

PRINCIPLE: Religious rites do not impress God, in fact, religion itself does not make an impression on God. Only a vital relationship to God through Jesus Christ gets the attention of God. Approbation with God comes only through Jesus Christ.

APPLICATION: Pride believes we impress God via something we do. It seeks to circumvent Jesus

Christ. Trust is placed in a human mode of operation, not in divine provision. Do you believe your religion or spirituality impresses God? Do you rest on what you have done as over against what Jesus Christ has done for you to gain the approbation of God?

We have before us an autobiography of an intensely religious man. Paul was a capable, confident man. He was confident in his education, family, skills and job. Religion gave him a veneer, a religious image. Paul depended upon his religion, character and morality. He thought religion would commend him to God.

Of the stock of Israel

This is the second in Paul's lists of accomplishments. He came from good stock. To come from good stock is not in itself bad. A family where noble ideals are steeped into children is of great account. It is good to come from a fine family stock, a family that prays together, reads the Word together and reaches out to others. But it is another issue to rest on our family roots to impress God.

Some people feel they are right with God just because they are Canadians or Americans. Others sense an acceptance with God because they came from a good religious background. But good roots do not gain God's approbation.

Of the tribe of Benjamin

Benjamin is one of the twelve tribes of Israel. When the tribes split Benjamin stayed with Judah in the south. The temple was located in Judah. The only tribe that was loyal was little Benjamin, the smallest of all the tribes.

"I say then, has God cast away His people? Certainly not! For I also am an Israelite, of the seed of Abraham, of the tribe of Benjamin" (Romans 11:1). Paul was proud of his heritage. This is pride of family. But it is another notion to think that this amasses brownie points with God. Family connection will not gain God's approval. The thesis runs something like this: "If I amass enough points with God, then God will be under obligation to accept me into heaven."

A Hebrew of the Hebrews

The fourth area he was convinced commended him to God was his ancestry. Paul had no Gentile blood in him at all. Both his father and mother were both full blooded Jews. He came from a long line of pure Hebrew stock. "Are they Hebrews? So am I. Are they Israelites, so am I. Are they the seed of Abraham? So am I" (II Cor. 11:22). When it came to his background, he had all the credentials in the world.

In itself, there is nothing wrong with ancestry. We should be proud of our family tree. In other words, this is not to insinuate that we might find someone in our family tree hanging by their tail but we might find someone hanging by their neck!!! However, God sidesteps ancestry, environment and heredity on the principle of pure unadulterated grace. That is the only way to find acceptance with God.

PRINCIPLE: Human credentials cannot give us God's approval. We gain God's approval only by grace.

APPLICATION: Do you think that God accepts you by your background? Do you truly throw yourself on the grace of God for his acceptance?

We have examined four accomplishments Paul imagined at one time commend him to God. Now we turn to his fifth boast before God.

Concerning the law, a Pharisee

There were two wings of religious leaders in Judaism: the Sadducees and the Pharisees. The Sadducees did not believe in the resurrection. That is why they were "sad, you see!!!" The descendants of the Sadducees are the liberal religionist of our day.

The Pharisees were sticklers for religion. Their religion was orthodox but rigidly so. No group transcended their self-righteousness. They were the ultimate legalists. They had a rule for everything.

These two groups were rivals for dominance in Judaism. Paul knew this. He even used this understanding of their rivalry to rescue his own hide as he stood in court: "But when Paul perceived that one part were Sadducees and the other Pharisees, he cried out in the council, 'Men and brethren,

ren, I am a Pharisee, the son of a Pharisee; concerning the hope and resurrection of the dead I am being judged!" (Acts 23:6). Paul took advantage of a long standing debate between these two groups. A raging debate ensued Paul's statement: "And when he said this, a dissension arose between the Pharisees and the Sadducees; and the assembly was divided. For the Sadducees say that there is no resurrection--and no angel or spirit; but the Pharisees confess both" (Acts 23:7,8).

Paul came out of orthodoxy. He came from a conservative theological background. He knew legalism to the core. He understood its fallacies and weaknesses.

The phrase "concerning the law" means according to the norms and standards of law. When it came to the laws of Judaism, Paul kept them religiously. He was confident in his religious regulations. He was confident in his race (Israel), family tree (Benjamin), his patriotism (Hebrew of Hebrews). Now he is confident in his religion.

Religion is a false basis of confidence because it rests upon the accomplishment of man. A Pharisee went to the synagogue three times a day. He prayed seven times a day. Christianity rests upon the accomplishments of Christ. No one is ever right with God by logging a great amount of time in religion. Religion attacks the grace principle as they did Paul.

PRINCIPLE: Confidence in religion displaces dependence upon God's grace.

APPLICATION: Are you working hard to gain God's acceptance? It is a futile exercise. The only person who can gain God's acceptance is Jesus Christ. We are positionally acceptable to God in Christ (Ephesians 1-3). We already have God's acceptance. We can rest in that.

Philippians 3:6

Concerning=====

zeal, persecuting the church, concerning the righteousness which is in the law, blameless.

The sixth of Paul's perceived assets is his religious zeal. To prove that he was at the top of his religion he became the foremost persecutor of this new rival religion.

Concerning zeal, persecuting the church

The man who wrote half the New Testament was at one time its principal persecutor:

"As for Saul (the apostle Paul), he made havoc of the church, entering every house, and dragging off men and women, committing them to prison" (Acts 8:3). He became a Christian in Acts 9.

"For I am the least of the apostles, who am not worthy to be called an apostle, because I persecuted the church of God" (I Cor. 15:9).

"But they were hearing only, 'He who formerly persecuted us now preaches the faith which he once tried to destroy'" (Gal. 1:23).

The word "concerning" means "according to the standard of." It was a norm of Paul's life to persecute the church. He made it an absolute norm to be religiously zealous. No other Jewish leader surpassed Paul in religious enthusiasm.

If salvation comes by zeal and enthusiasm, Paul would have been on the top of God's brownie point list. There was no one more sincere than Paul. But sincerity is not an excuse for wrong doing. If someone goes to the medicine cabinet for cough medicine and picks up a bottle of poison by mistake and drinks it, they were sincere. However, they were deadly wrong. Sincerity in that context is no virtue. Paul was mightily sincere but he was mightily wrong.

Christianity loses its character when it makes a virtue of zeal over truth. For example, when this happens, confidence is placed in a pleasant personality making them vulnerable to the failure of personality. They become weak in the moral fiber of truth. Their stability rests upon the ebb and flow of an unstable human being rather than in the eternal Word of God.

Religious zeal is no virtue in itself. Zeal minus truth is ignorance. Paul's own commentary on this aspect of his life is found in I Timothy 1:13 "Although I was formerly a blasphemer, a persecutor, and an insolent man; but I obtained mercy because I did it ignorantly in unbelief." Character is always connected to truth.

PRINCIPLE: Character is always based in truth.

APPLICATION: Have you placed your ultimate confidence in people rather than God? Obviously, a healthy human being trusts people but not in a

naive sense. To place our ultimate confidence in a finite human being is idolatry. It is also fleeting:

“Having been born again, not of corruptible seed but incorruptible through the word of God which lives and abides forever, because

‘All flesh is as grass, And all the glory of man as the flower of the grass. The grass withers. And its flower falls away, But the word of the LORD endures forever.’ (I Peter 1:23-25)

The seventh and last asset which Paul deeded before his conversion is about his own human righteousness.

Concerning the righteousness which is in the law, blameless

This is a righteousness without God. It is a counterfeit righteousness. It is equivalent to the righteousness of v. 9: “Not having my own righteousness, which is from the law.”

Paul kept up with his sacrifices. He was blamelessly scrupulous in keeping the sacrifices of the law. The law prescribed mechanisms for righteousness; he never failed to keep them. He was religious. However, he was religious but lost. To depend on anything but the blood of Christ is fatal. Paul does not say that he was perfect; he merely asserts his faithfulness to religion. He kept the ceremonial law perfectly.

The contrast here is between human righteousness and God’s righteousness. God’s righteousness can only be obtained by the sacrificial death of Christ.

PRINCIPLE: Religion does not commend us to God; only the blood of Christ wins God’s favor.

APPLICATION: Is your confidence in your religion or in your Savior? Jesus finished all suffering that needed to be suffered upon the cross. He did it all; all to him we owe. Anything less than that is sinking sand. “On Christ the solid rock I stand, all other ground is sinking sand.”

Philippians 3:7

But what things were gain to me, these I have counted loss for Christ.

In the immediate context we have seen the autobiography of an intensely religious man. Paul has just listed seven accomplishments he thought

would commend him to God. He supposed he could gain God’s favor by his religion. Verses seven and eight give Paul’s estimate of his scrupulous religiosity in one word--manure. Everything he assumed was an asset he found to be a liability before God.

But what things were gain to me

But word “but” is a conjunction of strong contrast. It is a right about face word. There is a strong contrast between legalism and grace. There is a massive difference between what we do to gain God’s favor and what Jesus did.

The word “what” means what quality of things. Such quality of things as the seven things he has listed in verses 5-6. These things he at one point estimated as “gain.”

These I have counted loss for Christ

Under grace nothing depends upon human achievement and self-confidence. Religion can give us a veneer, a religious culture. There is a disillusionment in depending upon religion, morality, character. This can be a synthetic, man-made righteousness which is not acceptable to God.

The word “counted” means to esteem, conclude. Paul concluded that everything he thought was success was failure. The Greek indicates that this became a settled conviction of his. He lost all confidence in his own attempts at gaining God’s favor.

The word “for” in “for Christ” means because of. It was because of Christ that he lost his confidence in self-confidence. The more he thought of the wonder of the person and work of Christ the less he thought of his accomplishments. Everything that we have in grace is because of Christ.

Paul changed his life ambition from one of the most religious men on earth to a man who loved the Lord Jesus with all his heart. This was the life ambition of a spiritual giant. This is more than a testimony of salvation; it is a testimony of spiritual aspirations.

Paul came from the right nation--Israel, the right race--Hebrews, the right sect--Pharisee; he had the right drive--zealous. He was always up on his sacrifices. He was scrupulously righteous. Yet all that

was manure (dung). All these things were weights, not wings. They were the rags of religion, the relics of superstition. As a girl who ends a relationship with her boyfriend gathers up all her letters and throws them into the fire, so Paul gathers up all his achievements and views them as a pile of manure. This is a vote of no confidence in Paul's pedigree. **PRINCIPLE:** Christianity is person centered. It is "because of Christ" we can live in the grace of God.

APPLICATION: Are you centered in Christ? Do you make much of him? It would be thrilling to be invited to Buckingham Palace to be introduced to the queen. That would be exciting. Yet we know the Lord of Glory, King of Kings. Does he diminish all the other pursuits of our lives? Is everything else a pile of manure in comparison to him? The studied estimate of the apostle Paul after more than two decades as a Christian was the inestimable wonder of the Lord Jesus Christ. He is the only one who has ever gained the approbation of God. He is the only one who can recommend us to God.

Philippians 3:8

Yet indeed I also count all things loss for the excellence of the knowledge of Christ Jesus my Lord, for whom I have suffered the loss of all things, and count them as rubbish, that I may gain Christ.

We have before us the life ambition of a spiritual giant. More than anything else Paul wanted the excellence of the knowledge of Christ his Lord. Initial salvation does not exhaust the person of Christ. Paul has been a Christian for two and a half decades and yet his life ambition is still centered in Christ.

Yet indeed I also

These four words constitute five Greek particles. These particles indicate Paul is speaking with passion and force here. He is shouting out. He is about to speak of his greatest passion. Paul waxes eloquent about the most important ambition of his life.

Count all things loss

The word "count" means to conclude. After thinking through a comparison between his achievements and his knowledge of Christ he came to a

conclusion. In the present tense it means that he keeps on concluding all things loss for something of greater importance. He has been a Christian for 25 years and he is still concluding this.

"All things" are his successes of vv 3-6: all his energy of the flesh, all his status symbols of success. This is all his achievement without God: his popularity, all the approbation he has received, all his successes. But this is a stronger statement than the loss of his achievements; he counts everything loss in comparison to Christ.

"Loss" is singular. All his accomplishments are nil as one big ball of wax.

For the excellence of the knowledge of Christ Jesus my Lord

Now Paul states his greatest aspiration. The most important ideal for Paul is the excellency of the knowledge of his Lord. It is more important than his ministry, prayer, fellowship or even evangelism. Fellowship with his Lord is the driving force behind these other wonderful values.

The word "for" means "because of." This is the cause of his suffering the loss of all things.

The word "excellence" is a verb which means "to be held over or beyond." It means to be superior, to excel. The Greek indicates that his superiority is the on going excellence of the knowledge of Christ Jesus his Lord. This knowledge is constantly superior. Nothing else is worth living for in the light of his superiority.

PRINCIPLE: Our highest ambition is the excellency of the knowledge of Christ.

APPLICATION: The studied estimation of Paul after 25 years of the Christian life was clear. After all those years as a Christian he has something more than a Savior--he has a Lord. Nothing brings greater glory to God than when a child of God confesses Christ as his Lord:

"And that every tongue should confess that Jesus Christ is Lord, to the glory of God the Father" (2:11)

Do we count knowing Christ as a priceless privilege? That sense of privilege is manifested in our lives when he is Lord of everything important to us.

After deliberate reflection Paul came to three negative conclusions about personal ambition. First he concludes his whole career as loss simply for Christ himself (v.7). Then he considered it loss for the surpassing privilege of knowing Christ personally (v. 8). Finally, he considered his aspirations as more than a minus. He concluded they were "rubbish" (v.8b) in comparison to full fellowship with the Lord.

For whom I have suffered the loss of all things

Paul abandoned his success mentality. He had placed his confidence in the wrong goals. There came a time when he abandoned lesser goals.

There is some truth to the statement "The church popular is the church polluted." When the church puts greater value on acceptance to the world, it loses the core vitality of knowing Christ fully.

"All things" here again means all his human attainments.

Very few of us in our day suffer much of anything. On the other hand, we fight for every ounce of success possible. Our success is our passion, our ambition. Has knowing Christ cost us anything? Has it cost us our job or business? Some growing Christians realize that their job compromises their convictions. They willingly sacrifice their job for their love of Christ.

The word "loss" suggests an accounting idea. This portrays profit and loss. This word occurs once in verse 7 and twice in verse 8. He records both what he gained and what he lost.

"For what will it profit a man if he gains the whole world, and loses his own soul?" (Mark 8:36). This passage may refer to the believer who loses the reason for his living before God in time.

Paul says in effect, "Do not look upon me with pity. Wait till you find out what I have received in their place."

PRINCIPLE: It is not enough to view ambitions from a positive viewpoint. To hold Christ exclusively we must view personal ambition as a "loss."

APPLICATION: In order to put priority on the things of greatest value we need to deal with our attitudes about lesser things. When we allow our minds to compete with the knowledge of the ex-

cellence of Christ, lesser things gain primacy in our values. Are we dealing adequately with the negative influences that pull us away from knowing Christ intimately?

Paul's personal ambition centered around knowing Christ fully. He wanted to become Christ centered in his spiritual life. In order to achieve that goal he needed to do something both negatively and positively. Negatively, he viewed personal achievement in a special way. Positively, he held Christ in a unique fashion.

And count them as rubbish

The word "count" occurs twice in verse 8. This second use of the word "count" means that Paul came to another conclusion in addition to the first use. The first use of "count" in verse 8 was in the sense of displacement. He displaced the excellency of knowing Christ for human success. In this phrase the word "count" means to negatively evaluate human achievement. It is one thing to place a great ideal before oneself; it is yet another to radically reject its competitor.

The word "rubbish" is human excrement. The word is in the plural. Human success is like a big pile of excrement. This is not extravagant language. Every standard of human success is viewed as so much excrement by Paul. He does not use abstruse language here! Human excrement has never been highly regarded by the human race! This is a very vivid portrayal of anything that attempts to compete with the knowledge of Christ

Excrement is waste from the human body. The nutriments have been taken out and used by the body. All that remains is waste. Anything that takes away from the knowledge of Christ should be look upon as waste.

That I may gain Christ

Paul is obviously already a Christian. Why does he then need to "gain Christ?" This is not gaining Christ in salvation. This is gaining a greater valuation for Christ as a Christian. Paul was not satisfied with mere acquaintance with Christ. His aim was to know the most wonderful person in the world better.

We could be worth billions of dollars but if we do not have Christ it will not count for much either in time or in eternity. We will leave all our gadgets behind in eternity. However, there never will be a time when we do not know Christ personally. We may lose our father or mother or even a child but there is never a time when we lose Christ. The worst thing that could happen to us cannot separate us from Christ:

"Who shall separate us from the love of Christ?" (Rom. 8:35)

PRINCIPLE: It is possible to advance spiritually far beyond our initial salvation. Knowledge of the excellency of Christ as our consuming passion should be our central ambition. We do not become a mature Christian until we become Christ centered. We must reject all competition to that goal.

APPLICATION: It is most difficult to hold Christ as the center of our lives if we have an active competitor with him. If our personal success is as important as he is, he cannot become the principal person in our lives. Does Jesus Christ have a rival in your life? Are you honest enough to acknowledge it? Do you have enough courage to deal with it?

Philippians 3:9

And be found in Him, not having my own righteousness, which is from the law, but that which is through faith in Christ, the righteousness which is from God by faith.

Some people suspect they have committed some terrible sin that precludes them from an eternal relationship with God. By entertaining this anxiety they build their own purgatory. They lose the confidence of their tie to the family of God.

And be found in him

The person doing the finding in this verse is God. The question is how will God find the believer at death? If I have committed some horrible sin, will God find me a sinner who is not eligible for eternal life? Or, at least, will God have to take me to some divine woodshed to discipline me before he lets me into his heaven? Will I have to suffer before God permits me into his heaven? No, God will find the believer at the point of death "in Christ."

The phrase "in Christ" is the believer's position before God. Our position is the same as that of Christ. When God looks at us it is the same as if he is looking at Christ. Christ has a perfect position before God so we have a perfect position before God. We hold the same status quo as Jesus holds before God. Jesus has perfect righteousness. Because we are in him, we have perfect righteousness. Jesus has eternal life, therefore, we have eternal life. Our position before God in Christ can never improve. It is perfect. It is perfect as Christ is perfect. At the moment of salvation we receive as much eternal life as we will have for eternity. We receive an absolute righteousness as perfect as Christ's absolute righteousness. Positional truth cannot improve. So at the point of death God will find us perfect in Christ.

Some people think that when Christ comes they must be at their best or they will not be accepted by him. We are as complete in Christ the day we become a Christian as the day we die. God's acceptance of us at death is never dependent upon how we conduct ourselves in time. It does not depend upon works; it depends upon his grace (God's work in Christ). We do nothing to get God's blessing; we have God's blessing in Christ.

The moment we receive Christ as our personal Savior we are placed in union with Christ, into his status before God. Our position never changes. We can never improve upon it. Everything depends upon Christ, not upon us, not upon our works. When we face God it will not be with our righteousness but with the righteousness of Christ.

This issue in this verse is how is the believer to be found at death by God. It is one thing to possess positional truth; it is another to apply it to ourselves at the point of death or at the Judgment Seat of Christ. Our position before God is the same as Christ's before God. Our status quo before God is equivalent to Jesus Christ's position before God. We are "in Christ." We will be found one way at death--"in Christ." We cannot improve our position in Christ because it does not depend upon our works. It does not rest on how we conduct ourselves in time; it depends solely on our relationship to Christ.

PRINCIPLE: Our status quo before God is the same as Jesus Christ before God forever.

APPLICATION: Our confidence at the Judgment Seat of Christ is not our works or the perfection of self, it is solely based on the finished, complete work of Christ. That work satisfies God completely. Our confidence is in Christ, not self.

Not having my own righteousness which is from the law

At death we can never stand in our own righteousness. Our righteousness from trying to live up to the standards of the law will be consumed in the fiery judgment of God's perfection.

Paul's "own righteousness" was his religion. He had all his religious bills paid (v.6) yet he was not right with God. Human righteousness is commendable in the eyes of men, not God. Good works, integrity, responsibility, honesty are all good in the sight of men. They are good on a horizontal level, but not on a vertical level. These things do not commend us to God. We cannot become a Christian by turning over a new leaf. Christianity is not a matter of dropping old habits and acquiring new ones. Becoming a Christian involves coming to God bankrupt of any self righteousness and depending solely on Christ's righteousness.

"But we are all like an unclean thing. And all our righteousness are like filthy rags; We all fade as a leaf, And our iniquities, like the wind, Have taken us away" (Isa. 64:6)

"Not by works of righteousness which we have done, but according to His mercy He saved us, through the washing of regeneration and renewing of the Holy Spirit" (Titus 3:5)

Good works are dependent upon the energy of the flesh. Paul previous to his conversion was a man weighted down with religion. In previous verses he recorded the things which he supposed would commend him to God. He listed seven of them. These things he thought were assets turned out to be liabilities. He had to reject them all. He replaced character, religion, success with Jesus Christ. In doing so, he did not trade religions. He traded in everything to receive a person. Christianity is a relationship, not a religion.

"For Moses writes about the righteousness which is of the law, 'The man who does those things shall live by them.'" (Rom. 10:5) In other words, the

righteousness which is of the law is summed up in the words "do." We never know when we have done enough. That uncertainty produces an anxiety which will never be satisfied. We never know whether the quality is good enough. We never know whether the quantity is large enough. We work and hope but never know for sure whether we have done enough even to the point of reaching death's door.

PRINCIPLE: Self righteousness can never satisfy God's righteousness. Only Christ's righteousness can satisfy God's righteousness.

APPLICATION: Some people try to earn God's favor. They try to bribe God by tithing or witnessing. Some business types feel that if they tithe God will bless their business. To do that is to depend upon self-righteousness to gain God's approval. In effect it is a bribe to get God's blessing. "If I live up to some standard then God may give me what I want." Yet there is nothing we can do to get blessings from God. This passage teaches us that we have blessing from God. There is not enough money in the world to bribe God for anything. God does not bless us because he is impressed with us; he blesses us because he is impressed with Christ. If God uses any of us it is because of God's provision, not because of who we are.

But that which is through faith in Christ

"But" here is a strong conjunction of contrast. In contrast to the law there is another righteousness. There are two kinds of righteousness. First, there is a spurious righteousness, a counterfeit righteousness, a man-made righteousness, a synthetic righteousness, a righteousness of man's endeavor. In God's eyes self-righteousness is a spurious righteousness. This is human righteousness.

The other righteousness is a righteousness whereby nothing in my hands I bring, simply to the cross I cling. It is a righteousness that is a gift from God through Christ.

These two righteousnesses cannot commingle. They are mutually exclusive to each other. It is impossible to mix them; it is an either/or situation. One is man's righteousness and the other is God's. This is human righteousness verses imputed righteousness. God's righteousness rests on revelation, on God's provision solely.

"Through faith" means through the instrumentality of faith. The word "faith" bears the emphasis here. Parallel to this expression is the phrase "the righteousness from God." This places the emphasis upon God as the object of faith. This person gives himself up and takes refuge in God's provision.

This is self-surrender. Faith is the collapse of every effort of human capacity. We can only take comfort in God's righteousness. God in his righteousness takes the sinner's part.

To believe is to view God as the effecting subject. We give God the glory by self-surrender. If God does the doing then God gets the glory. If we do the doing then we get the glory. The issue is a contrast between the glory of the flesh verses the glory in Jesus Christ. These exclude each other.

PRINCIPLE: When we view God as the effecting subject of giving us his righteousness, we give him the glory.

APPLICATION: When we yield to God's gift of imputed righteousness through Christ, he is glorified by that acknowledgement. Are we humble enough to admit that we have nothing to offer God?

The righteousness which is from God by faith

This is the other kind of righteousness differing from man's righteousness (3:9a). First there is the righteousness which we produce. Then there is the righteousness which God's produces. The great issue in salvation and in the Christian life is God's righteousness, not our righteousness.

"For they being ignorant of God's righteousness, and seeking to establish their own righteousness, have not submitted to the righteousness of God. For Christ is the end of the law for righteousness to everyone who believes." (Ro. 10:3,4)

"There is none righteous, no, not one" (Ro. 3:10). There is none righteous in reference to God. No one measures up to God's righteousness. People are righteous in reference to one another but not in reference to God.

"But now the righteousness of God apart from the law is revealed, being witnessed by the Law and the Prophets, even the righteousness of God, through faith in Jesus Christ, to all and on all who

believe" (Ro. 3:21,22). We can receive God's righteousness apart from keeping the law.

"But to him who does not work but believes on Him who justifies the ungodly, his faith is accounted for righteousness" (Ro. 4:5). In order to become a Christian a person must stop working for salvation. Work is a result, not a cause, of salvation.

Man cannot manufacture God's righteousness. God's righteousness must be given to him. God gives his righteousness by imputation (God "puts" his righteousness to the account of the believer). Imputation means that God reckons to our account the righteousness of Christ. That is God's arithmetic. That is the way God counts. God does not count human righteousness. He counts divine righteousness.

These two righteousnesses are mutually exclusive; they cannot mix together. God does not take 50% of our righteousness and 50% of his and mix them together to give us eternal life. He imputes only his righteousness.

God demands perfection. If God advances to us his righteousness, we can properly stand before him in eternity. He does not tolerate imperfection. He must live with himself, a perfect being. To do otherwise would compromise his perfection. This knocks the religious props of our righteousness out from under us. Our effort and righteousness cannot stand under the intolerable scrutiny of the laser white heat of God's holiness. God's perfect righteousness precludes human endeavor.

PRINCIPLE: God is the source of his own righteousness given to the believer.

APPLICATION: It is a great blessing to rest in God's gifts for us. We cannot earn or deserve God's favor; we cannot measure up to his absolute righteousness. All we can do is rest in the provision of God's righteousness through Christ.

Philippians 3:10

That I may know him and the power of his resurrection, and the fellowship of his sufferings, being conformed to his death.

This classic verse many Christians memorize or use as a life verse. It is interesting to look at this verse in its context. Paul is in the midst of giving his personal testimony. In this autobiography he

tells what he underwent as he brought all his religion to the cross and left it there. Paul is now a Christian for 25 years sitting in a Roman prison. Everything he once counted success he views as loss. Now he has the righteousness of God. This righteousness was available, not attainable, to him by Jesus Christ. As we come to verse 10 we see why he makes knowing Christ his life ambition. So in a few words we have the life ambition of a spiritual giant.

That I may know him

The word "that" introduces a purpose clause. This is Paul's life purpose. The life ambition of Paul was to know Jesus Christ better. He had known him for a quarter of a century. Yet he wanted to know him better. He could aim no higher. In verse 8 he referred to knowing Christ as "the excellence of the knowledge of Christ Jesus my Lord." There is no end to knowing about the greatness of Christ.

It is interesting how many people feel that coming to Christ initially in salvation is all there is to know of him. Initial salvation only introduces us to him. It does not exhaust the wonder of his person. As we grow in grace we will understand him better, "But grow in the grace and knowledge of our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ" (II Peter 3:18).

Through the study of the Word of God we will know him better. The Bible is even called "the mind of Christ" (I Cor. 2:16). The Word of God is God's thinking about Christ. We will become more intimate with him as we grow in grace. Salvation is only the beginning, the commencement of knowing him. His person is many splendored. It takes time to know him.

The word "know" means to know by experience. It is not enough to know Jesus Christ academically. We must know him personally by the experience of fellowship with him. That experience comes primarily from the study of Scripture.

PRINCIPLE: It is important to know more of Christ than simply in salvation. We need to experience him daily. We need to know him more intimately as our Lord.

APPLICATION: Since Christianity is essentially a relationship and not a religion, it is crucial to develop our relationship with the Lord. The more we

center on the person of Christ the more our spiritual life grows. If we lessen our relationship with him our spiritual life weakens. Are you daily studying the Word to know more of Christ. Is this your life ambition?

Having stated his life ambition to know Christ better, he now turns to three specific areas in which he wanted to know the Lord better.

There are three parts to his spiritual ambition. Each area is preceded by the pronoun "his." The first is "the power of his resurrection." These three items are not listed in order historically. They are listed in the order the believer experiences them in his spiritual life. It is difficult to know something about the sufferings of Christ until we know something about his resurrection. We would not have the spiritual capacity to be conformed to the death of Christ until we experience something of Christ's sufferings.

Paul wants to know more than just his resurrection, his sufferings and death. He wants to know something specific about each category.

And the power of his resurrection

Paul wanted to know something more than simply the resurrection of Christ. He wanted to know something of the power of the resurrection. He wanted the power of the resurrection of Christ in his everyday life. He is sitting in jail. He needs the power of the resurrection of Christ to go through trial.

The word "power" here means inherent power. It is the word from which we get the English word "dynamite." But the idea in the Greek is not dynamite but dynamo--a power that is always resident.

The power that brought Jesus up from the grave is the power now residing in believers. The power that raised Christ from the dead now operates in believers. This is the power Paul wanted in his Christian life. This dunamis is a vital power of the Christian life. Dunamis is nothing more than a manifestation of his glory, the sum total of his attributes, bestowed by the Father (Rom 6:4). This power transforms us day by day into the image of Christ (II Co. 3:18; 4:6). The Christian life is based on the power of God as over against human ingenuity.

This word *dunamis* occurs in the following passages:

"You are mistaken, not knowing the Scriptures nor the power of God" (Matt. 22:29). The Sadducees did not know the daily power of God in their lives.

Romans 1:16, "For I am not ashamed of the gospel of Christ, for it is the power of God to salvation for everyone who believes, for the Jew first and also for the Greek." The gospel has inherent power to save souls eternally.

"For the message of the cross is foolishness to those who are perishing, but to us who are being saved it is the power of God" (I Cor. 1:18). The gospel is powerful to Christians who are in the process of being saved from sin daily.

"And what is the exceeding greatness of His power toward us who believe, according to the working of His mighty power which He worked in Christ when He raised Him from the dead and seated Him at His right hand in the heavenly places" (Eph. 1:19,20). These verses are part of Paul's prayer that God would enable the Ephesians would know Christ better. They would know him better if they knew his power for their daily lives. The mighty power that raised Jesus out from the tomb of Joseph of Arimathaea is the power that can enable a believer to live his Christian life.

"Now to Him who is able to do exceedingly abundantly above all that we ask or think, according to the power that works in us" (Eph. 3:20). God's power works supernaturally in the believer's daily life.

"Who are kept by the power of God through faith for salvation ready to be revealed in the last time" (I Peter 1:5). God keeps our salvation unto eternity through his power, not ours.

PRINCIPLE: We have the power of the resurrection of Christ for our daily lives.

APPLICATION: Paul's life ambition was to know the power of the resurrection for his daily life. That power is available to us. Most of us do not avail it for ourselves. Do we come to the ocean with a thimble instead of a three-gallon pail? If we come with a thimble, it does not take much to satisfy us.

We have the power of God in salvation but we have the power of God for the Christian life as well. "For if when we were enemies we were reconciled to God through the death of His Son, much more...." There is something much more than our salvation. "...Much more, having been reconciled, we shall be saved by His life" (Rom. 5:10). We are saved every day by Jesus' life in heaven, the resurrection life of Christ. That life will save us from worry, anger and from anything that vexes his life. That power will save us from the gravitational tug of sin, from the seductive spell of sin. If Paul could live a life of victory in prison we ought to live a life of victory in the kitchen or the office. The only thing that can short circuit that power is a break in the line of communication between us and the Lord.

The second area which Paul wanted to know the Lord was "the fellowship of his sufferings."

And the fellowship of his sufferings

Fellowship is partnership. This is not partnership with the sufferings of Christ upon the cross. Only he was qualified to die our sins. This is partnership in his sufferings while he walked on earth. He was criticized for going to a party with sinners. He suffered religious persecution.

Paul says, "I want to be a partner in his sufferings." He has already stated in 3:8 "...for whom I have suffered the loss of all things." No one likes to suffer. Paul was no masochist. He had no desire to inflict wounds upon himself for Christ. Standing in the snow barefoot is no virtue. Wearing a burlap bag or horsehair underwear inflicts pain but has no spiritual value. Laying on a bed of spikes may torture the flesh but it does nothing for the spiritual life. These things will not subdue our sin capacity. Our flesh will not improve by this kind of suffering.

Partnership in the sufferings of Christ is not reserved for the super-saints. Not many of us are called upon to suffering seriously for Christ. Few of us will die for Christ. Hypothetically, should there come a day when Christians of our day suffer extensively for Christ, I wonder how many would be loyal to Christ? Should you face the supreme test, how would you respond? The quality of life of the average evangelical today will not stand under pressure. Most people in evangelical churches today are religious spectators. Most do

not intend to go to any extraordinary extent to live for Christ. They do not take their Christianity seriously, "You do not expect me to get involved in a Bible study, do you?" "I cannot share my faith at work, it might affect my business. Do you think that I am a fanatic?"

At the end of life's day when we look back over our lives will we have lived for me, myself and I? Did we serve self? "Oh, I wish I was in my twenties again? I would start over. I would put priority on the things that are most important. Now that I am dying there is little left to my life."

Paul wanted to know the Lord better by entering into his sufferings. Peter said the same thing, "Beloved, do not think it strange concerning the fiery trial which is to try you, as though some strange thing happened to you; but rejoice to the extent that you partake of Christ's sufferings, that when His glory is revealed, you may also be glad with exceeding joy" (I Pet. 4:12,13). We do think it strange that we suffering for Christ. It seems odd that we can "rejoice to the extent that you partake of Christ's sufferings."

When Jesus went to the cross he went with an attitude, "Looking unto Jesus, the author and finisher of our faith, who for the joy that was set before Him endured the cross, despising the shame...For consider Him who endured such hostility from sinners against Himself, lest you become weary and discouraged in your souls" (Heb. 12:2,3). What was his attitude? He went to the cross knowing he was to die for the sins of the world. He went knowingly. He understood fully the horrors of the cross. He wanted the will of God, nothing less. That is why we are challenged in 2:5 to "Let this mind (attitude) be in you, which was also in Christ Jesus."

PRINCIPLE: We know Christ better when we live by his values. Invariably living by his values causes sufferings. We should face duress with the same attitude Jesus did.

APPLICATION: Are you a partner with Christ in his sufferings? To what extent does your Christianity go? Does it go to the point of pain? Do you have an attitude about pain?

The third category by which Paul wanted to know the Lord better was conformity to his death.

Being conformed to his death

The word "conformed" means to take on the same form as his death. It means to make like form with another person or thing, to render like.

This does not mean to die on a cross like Christ did. The trust is to have the same mental attitude Jesus did when he went to the cross. When Jesus was in the Garden of Gethsemane he said, "If it be your will, let this cup pass from me, nevertheless, not my will, but yours be done." Jesus understood fully what he was about to face. He knew the horrors of the cross. Yet he still went to the cross. Jesus faced pressure with a certain orientation.

Tradition believes that Paul was beheaded. He did not die in bed. Most of us would prefer to die in bed, with white sheets, with a nurse or two, with a head physician plus a couple of interns. It probably will not work out that way. We had little to do with our entrance into the world and we will have little to do with our exit.

What epitaph will they place on our tombstone? What will people say about us? What would we want them to say? Will they say, "He lived for Christ? He put priority on eternal values?" Most of us have heard the couplet: "Only one life, 'twill soon be past. Only what is done for Christ will last." If we could only view things in light of eternity, we would put Christ first. Our perspective on life would be entirely different. We would put God first. Everything else would be incidental.

Yet, we generally put everything else first. We relegate the things that count for eternity to our spare time. We consign eternal priorities to hobbies. We dispatch winning people to Christ to whatever is left over from other priorities.

We do not live with eternal values in view. Most of us feel the main thing is to make a living, stay healthy, raise our children, get a good education and be a good citizen. All this will be put in proper perspective in eternity. These are good things. Good things can become distorted if put them in inverted order. Paul put the Lord at the head of his list, "That in all things He might have the preeminence" (Col. 1:18). Jesus was "Mr. Big" in his life.

Everything we have belongs to him. That includes our children, education, health, job, business,

house, friends. All that he have must conform to him. All we possess belongs to him. What an ambition to "know him!" Any experience in life will help me know him better whether I am perpendicular or horizontal. One reason God lays us horizontally is that we will know him better.

In Romans 8:29 Paul set forth Jesus as the model to which we should be conformed, "For whom He foreknew, He also predestined to be conformed to the image of His Son." God predestines us to be conformed to the image of his son. He determines that every child of God shall be ultimately like the Lord Jesus, even if he has to take us to the wood shed! To God, it is inconsequential whether we live twenty years or ninety years. John the Baptist and Jesus both died young. It is not how long we live that matters to God but how well. How well we live is determined by how well we know Christ personally.

PRINCIPLE: The length of our lives or the time of our death is incidental to God. The quality of life from God's viewpoint is how well we have come to know Christ.

APPLICATION: What epitaph will be on your tombstone?

Philippians 3:11

If, by any means, I may attain to the resurrection from the dead.

In the English, this verse Paul appears to doubt that he will rise from the dead. Does he doubt the assurance of his salvation?

Verse eleven is a continuation of Paul's personal testimony about his spiritual aspirations.

If, by any means

The Bible was originally written in Greek. There are four ways of saying "if" in the Greek. One of these "ifs" is to assume the statement as true. This is brought out by spelling, not interpretation. The "if" in this phrase is something Paul is assuming true. Paul is not doubting something; he is asserting a fact. The word "if" can be translated "since." "Since I will attain to the resurrection from the dead" is the idea. He has confidence in his eternal state.

Paul assumed that he might be raptured. This did not happen. He died and his soul went to heaven.

His body will be raptured later when Jesus comes again. At minimum, he was assured of the destiny of his body.

I may attain to the resurrection from the dead

In verse ten Paul wanted to know the power of the resurrection and be conformed to the death of Christ. Whatever the cost, he was willing to die like Christ died. Whatever the future holds he knows he will be resurrected. His confidence is independent of circumstances.

The word for "resurrection" in this phrase is used no where else in the Greek New Testament. The idea is a resurrection out from among the dead. There are two resurrections but one is out from among the dead. The one is for Christians and the other for non-Christians (John 5:28). There is a resurrection of the dead and there is a resurrection from the dead. The resurrection from the dead is the first resurrection of believers to be with their God. The resurrection of the dead is the resurrection of non-Christians to face judgment. Everyone will surface in one resurrection or the other. The resurrection of his passage is a partial resurrection out from among the corpses of non-Christians. Literally, this word means "out-resurrection."

Why did Paul say that he wanted to "attain" the out-resurrection from among the dead? Again, did he doubt he would be at this out-resurrection? Perhaps he was using the word "attain" for the rapture that has no predicted time frame for Christ's return. In any case, the words "attain" means to cross the goal line. The idea is to arrive. Paul did not know if he would die before the rapture or whether the rapture would occur before his death. Paul knows that he is going to arrive in heaven. He does not know by what means. Either his body will be raptured up from among other dead bodies or his soul will go to heaven at the point of his physical death.

PRINCIPLE: We have assurance that we will arrive at the out-resurrection from among the dead ones. Therefore, we have confidence both about time and eternity.

APPLICATION: The believer who is assured of eternity looks at eternity positively. He sees eternity with confidence. When he dies, he knows that he will "arrive" home. Assurance is based on the

work of Christ not on whether we deserve it. God provides eternity for us.

If this is true, we should have no concern about the future in time or eternity. Many people worry about the future. Some people worry so much that it has become an occupational hazard. If people do not worry about themselves they worry about their children or grandchildren. Some say that "Everything is going down the drain." That may be true. What difference does it make if our future is assured?

Worry always muddies the waters. Worry blinds us to solutions. We do not see issues clearly. Do we ever solve family issues by worry? If the family sits down and "shares" their worries, they are now twice as worried because they have shared their worries. Now the only apparent option is to swallow some pills to blunt the pain. We never get anywhere by worry.

Confidence in eternity shows us that God is sovereign. He is in control of all things both in time and eternity. Why should we fall apart by every jolt in the road? Our confidence is in the one who provides for us, not in circumstances or self. If God can provide for my eternal inheritance, he can provide for me in time.

Philippians 3:12

Not that I have already attained, or am already perfected, but I press on, that I may lay hold of that for which Christ Jesus has also laid hold of me.

No Christian is perfect, not even the apostle Paul. He had not "attained" his life ambition set forth in verse ten. He was still actively pursuing the knowledge of Christ. He had grown over the twenty five years but he still had some distance to go to reach his goal. The Christian life is a process, not an event.

Not that I have already attained

The word "attained" means to receive, grasp, appropriate, lay hold. We use the word "arrived" today. Paul did not want to give the impression that he had arrived in his pursuit of the excellency of the knowledge of Christ. Most of us want to give the impression that we are a "super-saint." We want to make the impression that we have

arrived. When we do this, we are in trouble for we delude ourselves into believing we do not need to grow any more.

As long as Paul is alive God has a purpose for him. For whatever purpose Paul remains on the earth, it is not completed yet. Since he knows this, he is not shaken by the dire events swirling around him. God will keep him on earth until he is finished with him.

Or am already perfected

There are three levels of sanctification of the saint. First, the saint is sanctified positionally. He/she holds the same status that Jesus holds before the Father. This sanctification can never improve. It was given to us fully at the point of salvation. We stand perfect in our status, not in our experience. In experience we sin. Our status in God's eyes is perfect because of Christ's work on the cross.

The second level of sanctification is progressive, experiential sanctification. If all things are equal, every day we grow more like the Lord Jesus (II Co. 3:18). When we stop growing we become static. When we are static we become stagnate. When we stagnate we become rancid--our Christian life smells!! Our life should be a beautiful aroma but instead, we give out a stench. Some of us have not grown much in the last ten years. We have little appetite for the Bible. We are temporally dead in our spiritual life. We are in a spiritual rut. A rut is a grave with the ends knocked out.

The third level of sanctification is ultimate sanctification. In eternity we will be free from sin and the sin capacity. This is the level Paul is talking about in the phrase "am already perfected." This is the perfection God gives the believer upon his arrival in heaven.

PRINCIPLE: Our Christian life must remain vital. We need to grow every day (II Pet. 2:2;3:18). We never arrive.

APPLICATION: A stalemate in chess is when the game can go no further because both players have reached an impasse. The Christian can never reach that stalemate in time. Nothing can so daunt the Christian that he/she cannot continue to grow.

On the other hand, we cannot "arrive" spiritually in this life on earth. There is always room to grow more like the Lord Jesus and be conformed into his image. Every Christian can say that we are not what we once were. We can also say that we are not what we shall be. Are you different today than you were a year ago? Are you going on with the Lord Jesus?

There are many pursuits in life. Some pursue fame. Others chase after sex. Yet others strive for money and success. Paul's personal pursuit was clear. He wanted to represent his Lord in time.

But I press on

The words "press on" means pursue. What is Paul pursuing? He is after the "prize" of verse fourteen. Some of us do not seem to realize that there is a prize at the end of the day. Heaven is not that prize. We do not earn or deserve heaven. Heaven was given to us by what Christ earned and deserved. Paul is after the smile of Christ on his life at the end of his days.

Paul has not completed his stint in time. God still has a purpose for him. Nothing can remove him, hurt him, or kill him until his purpose on earth is complete. He has confidence that God has a plan for him as long as he is alive.

That I may lay hold of that for which Christ Jesus has also laid hold of me

Paul wanted to grasp hold of his life's pursuit. He wanted to latch on to it. He wanted to get such a good grip on it that he would not let go. He did not want to disappoint Jesus. If you marry a husband he may turn out to be a disappointment. "Well, I dated him for four weeks!" We cannot even tell if he brushes his teeth after dating him for a month! If we lay hold of pleasing Jesus with our lives, we will not receive his frown but his smile when we meet him.

Not only does Paul take hold of something but Jesus does as well. Paul says, "In my flight toward hell, Jesus took out after me and held me in his grip." Christ laid hold of Paul for a purpose. Jesus wanted Paul to represent him in time on earth. He represents us in heaven and we represent him on earth. Paul wanted to accomplish all for which Christ had saved him. He did not want to disappoint the Lord.

The first "laying hold" was done by Paul. He needed to lay hold of the purpose for his life on earth. The second "laying hold" is done by Christ Jesus. At the point of salvation Christ laid hold of Paul for a purpose. That purpose was to represent Jesus Christ in time. Our purpose here is to represent the Lord Jesus. He represents us in heaven; we represent him in time. Since we are here for the purpose of glorifying him, we need to lay hold or latch onto that purpose.

PRINCIPLE: God has a purpose for our lives. He wants us to represent him on earth in time.

APPLICATION: God has a track for the locomotive of your life to run upon. Has your locomotive jumped the track? Has your life come crashing down in one great accident? You are no longer in the will of God. You are not in regular fellowship with God. As long as you are alive God has a plan for you. No matter whether you have had a major accident, a massive crash, as long as you are alive, God has a purpose for you. No matter what you sin, if you are alive, God has a purpose for you. If your finger is out of joint, put it back in place. If you are out of fellowship, confess your sin. Get back on track.

The only place where we can become free from the slavery of malice, hatred and grudges is in fellowship with our Lord. By being in the center of God's will we can have a life of freedom. If we allow sin to control us we are in slavery. Sin eats the soul. Someone has said, "It is not what you eat that kills you, it is what eats you." Are you eaten up by malice? What is eating you? Life is too short. We cannot afford to bear grudges. Time is too short. The stake is too high. If we hold ill will long enough it might secure such a hold upon us that we will take it right into the casket with us. Are we ready to get squared away?

Philippians 3:13

Brethren, I do not count myself to have apprehended; but one thing I do, forgetting those things which are behind and reaching forward to those things which are ahead

Paul, by using the perpendicular first person singular "I" fifteen times from verse four to fourteen sets before us the development of his own soul before God. This maturity process is triggered by the cataclysmic event of becoming a Christian.

Spiritual birth commences a life-long process of growth into maturity.

Brethren, I do not count myself to have apprehended

By the use of “brethren” he is addressing those who have come to know Christ personally. By personally addressing the Philippians as “brethren” he draws them into his experience. This reminds us that no Christian has arrived in his/her growth in time on earth.

The word “count” means to calculate. By studied evaluation Paul came to a calculation. He did not come to this decision by a snap opinion. He thought about it. He came to the conclusion that eternal values (vv 13,14) will keep his perspective right. God has a plan for him. God is managing that plan perfectly. Paul puts confidence in that plan. God has a purpose for every believer in time. Paul wants to “latch on” to the purpose God has for him.

The first calculation Paul makes is a negative one. He does not calculate himself as having reached the final destination in his spiritual growth. He says, “I do not want you to get the impression that I have arrived at the point of ultimate maturity. I do not want to leave you with the idea that I have no further room to grow as a Christian.” He had been a Christian between 25 and 30 years at this time.

For the third time the word “apprehended” occurs in this context. The first use of “apprehend” pertains to appropriating God’s provisions for the Christian life. The second refers to the utilization of the cross for salvation. In this verse “apprehend” refers to reward (v.14). When we think we have arrived spiritually is the point we begin to fall. We never stay at the same place in our spiritual life. We either grow or revert. We go up or down. We progress or regress. We never stand still. If an army sits in one place in war the enemy will target their position. An army must continue to move to keep the enemy from using them as a target. That is why it is dangerous to consider ourselves to have arrived spiritually.

PRINCIPLE: Growth is a continuing process in the spiritual life.

APPLICATION: As we eat and exercise spiritually we develop Christian character. Every true Christian develops to some extent after becoming a Christian but few grow over a protracted period. With increasing amount of light a Christian sprouts divine character that only God can give. Whatever balance of growth left over when we go to be with the Lord is given to us instantaneously. Growth is relative. Spirituality is absolute. Either we are spiritual or we are not. Growth is a matter of degree. There are horizons yet ahead. There is more grace to appropriate for life. The Lord apprehended me. Now I need to apprehend what he has apprehended me for. Do you want to realize the purpose for which you have been apprehended? What is the unfinished business God has in your life? One reason God allows us to fall on our face so often is to keep us from the delusion that we are a super-saint. We are spiritually smug. Smugness creates a spiritual self-complacency. God then will pick our inflated spiritual cranium with a needle to deflate our pride. Pride always heads us toward a fall (Prov. 16:18).

Few of us possess notable powers of concentration. The reason for this want is we do not live for a single purpose and clear goals. Our pursuits splatter all over the map. Paul was a man who incorporated purpose into his life. He knew the destiny of his life.

But one thing I do

Even though Paul did not arrive at ultimate spiritual maturity this does not mean he was ineffective. The phrase “one thing I do” means concentrated purpose. He was a man of consolidated purpose.

Paul could have chosen many options but he chose only one. His life was not like a shot gun blast but like a rifle shot. Many purposes spread us so thin we become ineffective. We do so many things all we can do is one squirt’s worth for each. We spread ourselves thin. Businesses are short-handed. That is why we suffer such poor service. Too few employees do too much. Few can do their jobs with excellence. Better paying jobs are snatched by people with better ability. The quality of workmanship is reduced by those with lesser ability. It is better to focus on God’s plan for us and stick with it.

This is similar language to Matthew 6:22,23: "The lamp of the body is the eye. If therefore your eye is good, your whole body will be full of light. But if your eye is bad, your whole body will be full of darkness. If therefore the light that is in you is darkness, how great is that darkness!" The eye is not the light. It catches the light and enables us to see. The light which gets into the soul is dependent upon the spiritual state of the eye. The word "good" in the phrase "your eye is good" means your eye is healthy. The eye can see clearly because it is healthy. The whole body will be "full of light." The person will see eternal values. However, if the eye "be evil" (out of order) the soul will be full of darkness. If our focus is on eternal values it is because we tune in spiritually.

PRINCIPLE: God wants us to concentrate on his purpose for us in time.

APPLICATION: Do you keep eternal values in view? Is your life a reflection of spiritual light shining in your soul?

Many Christians keep skeletons in their closets. They hide secret sin in their hearts. Every time some reversal comes into their lives they convince themselves that it is due to sin/s they committed in the past. Because of this they carry guilt complexes. Devoid of liberty they disqualify themselves from serving the Lord.

Forgetting those things which are behind

Some of us live in past regret. We grieve over bad choices. We rehearse our failures and sin over and over to ourselves. There seems to be a compulsion to constantly punish ourselves for those failures lest we fall again. People who practice this belief system cripple their Christian lives.

Others nurse injustices done to them. They cannot disengage from their hurts. They cannot allow themselves to forgive. The injustice may have transpired twenty years ago but it is still present in the mind as if it were yesterday. "It galls me every time I think about it. I just can't get over it." Every time we think about the injury acid pours into our system.

Some marriages are awash with recriminations. They never let the other person forget their failure. It seems almost impossible to cease and desist from hurling barbs. This creates an almost hopeless domestic relationship. This violates a funda-

mental value in God's economy. The value extends beyond forgiveness; the value is to forget. If they do not own this value then the marriage is doomed to perpetual misery. We might as well lock them in a room and let them scream at each other for the rest of their lives.

The word "forget" means literally to forget upon or over, that is, we are to forget in consequence of something else. We can get over past hurts because of something more important. Since forgiveness is ours by Christ what consequence is there to past hurts? Is it worth stewing over past wrongs in the light of Christ's forgiveness? Assign to oblivion every hurt of the past in view of the cross.

We need to forget the wrong and move on. We should forgive and forget. If someone should confront us that this damages our spiritual life, we say, "Well, I will forgive but I won't forget." Then we will die spiritually before our time. Temporal spiritual death occurs in the believer because he/she wants to punish the other person for what they have done. They do not want to release the anger hold against the other person. Growth is impossible with such an attitude.

The Greek indicates that we personally benefit by forgetting past failures. We also benefit by forgetting the failures of others. We surmise that there is benefit in rehearsing our failures. We believe there is some worth in the memory of pain, "If I remember what I did I will never do it again." We believe it gives us security and a sense of control if we keep it active in our mind. However, this is what constitutes an obsession. The need to control uncertainties, unanticipated pain is a losing battle. The desire to control pain by negative thinking will lead us into destructive spiritual bondage. God says there is benefit in forgetting the past, not remembering it. Forgetting will liberate us from the bondage of thinking about it. We are then free from occupation with it.

God's solution is the opposite of obsession. It is the polar diametrical opposite of evoking memory to control pain. God's answer is I John 1:9, "If we confess our sins, He is faithful and just to forgive us our sins and to cleanse us from all unrighteousness." It is a matter of believing that God, not our memories. We cannot continue to grow and mature as a believer as long as we refuse to forget.

PRINCIPLE: Forgetting the past is an act of faith.

APPLICATION: Only mature believers can forget past hurts. The ability to confess a sin and believe that God rendered that sin into oblivion takes confidence in God's promises. Others many remember my sins but I have rendered them into spiritual amnesia. The ability to assign into amnesia confessed sin is the principle Paul is referring to here.

A spouse may remember every offense in the marriage. They may reach into the garbage can and pull out your failures. That is a grab for power lust. It is one-up-manship. To get the best of the argument we pull garbage out to gain control of the argument. The principle is "I will get the best of the argument by putting you down. I will excuse my failure by drawing attention to your failure."

A mature believer does not enter this cycle of destruction. Mature believers assign their past and the past of others into amnesia. How ridiculous it would be if a neighbor came to our front door and said, "Look what I found in your garbage can" Any relationship in life calls for criticism. Inevitably we will do something that others will criticize. You can say "Come on in and we will talk about it" or you can run out to their garbage can to see what you can find. Typically, in arguments between husband and wife, each goes into the garbage can to find a bigger piece of garbage. Is that the way you want to live?

That is the way we live when we do not forget the past. We excuse our failures on the basis of someone else's failures. Once we confess sin we should never look back on that sin. Once others have confessed their sin we should never hold them to their sin. That takes strong faith.

Paul sets forth two perspectives-- "those things which are behind" and "those things which are ahead." Some people live in the past. Paul wants us to live in the future.

How good are you at forgetting? Why not forget your failures? Why not forget the failures of others? Some people cannot overlook injustice perpetrated upon them. They nurse injustices of five years ago. They harbor the hurt. They cannot forget it. This cripples their spiritual life. They end up spiritual pygmies.

Some people grieve over the girl they got into trouble many years ago. They remember like it was yesterday the thing they stole. Yet God himself does not remember them, "Their sins and their lawless deeds I will remember no more" (Heb. 10:17). These things have been obliterated from the mind of God and are gone. God never throws things in our face he has forgiven.

And reaching forward to those things which are ahead

It is not enough to forget the things of the past. We should think of things ahead. There are horizons over yonder. There is so much unconquered spiritual territory we cannot waste time on past failures. We should invite God to push back our horizons. What would God do if we would let him? The best is yet ahead for the child of God. The best and most fruitful years are yet before the spiritual dynamic person.

The word "reaching forward" is an athletic term in the Greek meaning to sprint for the finish line. It is a burst of effort to reach the goal first. Now that you have dealt with your guilt complex, sprint to the tape of a Christ centered life.

"Those things which are ahead" refers to those things ahead in your life. This does not refer to eternity. We do not drive for eternity. We contend to finish our lives in the winner's box of glorifying Christ.

PRINCIPLE: It is not enough to forget the past. God wants us to enter the track meet of glorifying Christ. Our focus should change from the past pain to future prevail.

APPLICATION: A key to conquering the past is to focus on the future. How future oriented are you? Have you entered the race toward God's revealed will? Is your life designed to glorify Christ? If we do not make the transition from the past to the future we will remain religious dwarfs.

Philippians 3:14

I press toward the goal for the prize of the upward call of God in Christ Jesus.

Now at last we discover Paul's goal. What is the goal of his life? His life-long aspiration is the smile of Jesus Christ at their meeting in heaven.

"Press toward" expresses the idea of pursuit after or follow earnestly. Paul keeps his eye on the goal. He does not allow anything to deter him from his goal. Like a marathon runner he keeps his eye on the finish. He follows earnestly after the wreath. He was not going through the paces. He would not stop to talk to the fans in the stands even though the race is over twenty miles. Time is too precious for that.

It is the devil's business to distract us from the goal. If we take time to answer the bystanders, the critics, we lose precious time and focus. If we indulge ourselves with anger, we will not finish well. "But the media told lies about me. Some of the fans made unfair remarks about my running." That thinking will deflect us from our ultimate goal.

We will get the prize when we reach the goal. The goal has not arrived yet. We look for our Savior's words, "Well done, good and faithful servant; you were faithful over a few things, I will make you ruler over many things" (Matt. 25:21).

PRINCIPLE: We need to "press" toward the goal. Anything less will deflect us from finishing well.

APPLICATION: Have you started the race, have you received a spiritual birth from God? If so, have you left the starting blocks? Have you begun to run the Christian life? Have you ever heard the starter's pistol? Have you responded to our Lord's challenge to live a focused life for his glory? Did you leap off the starting blocks and then slow down? Is your Christian life less robust now than at the beginning? Have you slowed down to a jog? Are you loping along through your Christian life? Some of us may have slowed to a walk. Others may be standing still. Yet others have sat down. Some have even laid down their spiritual life and that is why they are called a "laymen!!!"

The word "prize" is a poignant expression connoting a wreath or crown. This wreath was bestowed upon the victor in the public games of the Greeks. A garland of ivy was placed upon the head of the winner. The garland did not look like much. However, the assets which went with the wreath was the true prize. The victor was publicly lauded by his home city. He no longer paid taxes which is no meager advantage! The city made a statue of him and put it in the public square.

The Bible lists five possible "crowns" a believer may receive when he meets his Lord. At a given signal the saints in glory will cast their crowns before the throne of Jesus (Rev. 4:10,11). Will you have a crown to cast before his throne?

The prize for the believer is the place of victory. Victory is when a person reaches a place of strength and maturity in Christ. Christ has become the center of his life, not a peripheral place.

The "upward call" is the time when the believer is called to glory to meet his Lord. It is the point that God recognizes whether the believer has reached a point of maturity in Christ. The central question asked by God is whether we lived our lives centered around the glorification of Christ.

When we arrive in heaven we will receive our "prize." We do not receive the prize before heaven. We get it at the finish line. This is that for which Paul was "driving" or "pressing forward" (3:14a).

"In Christ Jesus" is our positional truth before God in Christ. We hold the same status before God as Jesus Christ. When we stand before God at the upward call we will stand there "in Christ." Our right to stand before God is our standing in Christ. Eternal life will not be more real then than it was at the moment we received Christ as our Savior. At that time God will not question whether we should be there in heaven. The question will be what did we do with our Christian life. Was it a profitable life or did we waste it?

PRINCIPLE: One day each believer will have an upward call to meet his/her Savior. That call will be based on our status in Christ. Every Christian is guaranteed to see the Lord because of that status. Every Christian will face the Lord's evaluation of the quality of life he/she spent in time.

APPLICATION: Are you living for the day you will meet the Lord? Do you anticipate that meeting? Do you focus your life around that future meeting? Paul's entire life-ambition focused around that meeting. Do you live your life around that rendezvous?

Philippians 3:15

Therefore let us, as many as are mature, have this mind; and if anything you think otherwise, God will revbeal even this to you.

Paul did not let anything deter or deflect him from the upward-call orientation (v.14), "I will not allow anything or anyone deter me from my goal." To be deterred is as bad as to be deflected. To be deterred is to be held back. To be deflected is to divert to a tangent. Either way, we miss the mark of the upward-call. These are the devil's booby traps. He tries to "sucker" us into some bargain other than the upward-call. The devil has a way to make a mountain out of a molehill to warp our perspective. If that does not work, then he will hold us back so that we run on a treadmill of no headway.

"Therefore" indicates an inference from the preceding paragraph. Those who no longer keep skeletons in the closet and have gone on to become Christ-centered should reorient their lives. This is a challenge to those who are "mature." The call is towards an attitude to the upward-call. This appeal is to those whose life-ambition is to live their lives with an upward-call orientation. The entreaty is towards an attitude of Christ-centeredness.

A mark of maturity is the desire to continue with Christ. Most of us live in the backwoods of a dynamic relationship with Christ. We do not live near the exalted palace of our position in Christ. The challenge here is to appropriate positional truth to experience. Positional truth is our status quo before God in Christ. We hold the same status that Jesus enjoys before the Father.

PRINCIPLE: It takes an attitude to live a life of the upward-call.

APPLICATION: Is Jesus sweeter today than the day before? Are you deeper in love with the Lord this year than last year?

Verses 15 and 16 submit the life that pleases God. A life that pleases God is one of maturity. Paul asks his audience to walk with him in the objective of Christlikeness. His goal for himself was his goal for them.

Paul states in verse twelve that he was not "already perfected. Verse twelve conveys the idea of sinless perfection. He insists he never attained that. In this verse he uses the a similar term in the sense of spiritual adulthood, spiritual maturity.

The first order of business after birth is nourishment, "As newborn babes, desire the pure milk of the word, that you may grow thereby, if indeed you have tasted that the Lord is gracious" (II Pet. 2:2,3). When a person is first born into the family of God he has life and that is all. He knows nothing about how to live the Christian life. He does not even know everything there is to know about his birth. He does not know about justification, reconciliation or propitiation. All this he will discover to his delight later in his spiritual life. For the moment all he knows is that he was lost without Christ and with confidence in Christ's death on the cross he owns a right relationship with God. New birth is the crisis that launches a process. The process is maturity in Christ.

When parents bring a baby home from the hospital they are concerned with nourishment, not life. The baby received life at conception. They are not concerned with life but with development. It would be a tragedy if the baby still had a baby's body at five years of age. A baby needs nourishment. The proper formula is necessary if a baby is to receive the right vitamins and minerals.

In II Peter 2:2 Peter challenges new believers to "desire the pure milk of the Word." The word "pure" means unadulterated. If a baby Christian is to grow, he needs to hear God's voice without distortion. We are long on devotionals (even such devotionals as Today's Word!!) and short on the Bible. If we use substitutes in place of the Bible we will lack spiritual nourishment. A baby must have pure milk. A new Christian cannot allow any spiritual substitute to displace the Word of God. Growth groups, fellowship and Christian books are no alternate to the unadulterated Word of God. The fundamental nourishment for growth is God's voice.

PRINCIPLE: The Bible in its unadulterated form is the basis for Christian growth.

APPLICATION: Have you substituted numerous complexities into your spiritual diet? Has that process blunted your spiritual growth? Have you taken a detour from the Word? Why not return to the unadulterated Word of God?

Paul referred to the Corinthians, who had been Christians for some time, as "babes in Christ" (I Cor. 3:1). A baby is totally dependent upon some-

one else for nourishment. Paul could not speak to the Corinthians as people who could feed themselves. He spoke to them as babies dependent on others. They did not know how to feed themselves spiritually. They did not know the principles of the Word. They did not apply the Word to their experience. Therefore, they did not grow. They were ignorant of the Christian life.

No one expects a baby to behave like a teenager. We do not expect much from a baby. A baby cannot chew steak. A baby must begin with milk. The formula increases gradually the weeks after birth. Eventually the baby begins to eat solid food. As a Christian grows, hopefully he eats the right kind of food (the Word of God) and the right amount.

Eventually the baby grows out of babyhood into childhood. If all things are equal (eating and exercising well), they will grow into manhood or womanhood. Growth out of infancy means they no longer think and act as a new Christian. They no longer demand their own way most of the time. If they keep growing, they develop into spiritual fathers and mothers who have the ability to reproduce themselves.

It takes some Christians thirty years to grow into maturity. Others reach spiritual adulthood in just a few years. We have all seen new Christians who have been believers for only a few months outstrip others who have been Christians for decades. All along the highway Christians are pegged by God for their progress toward their destination of maturity.

If a baby does not increase in weight and length after a few weeks, something stunts its growth. Lack of nourishment is likely the cause. Christians stunt their growth due to lack of subsistence. They may not know the grace of Christ. Their knowledge of Jesus the Lord is embryonic and undeveloped, "But grow in the grace and knowledge of our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ" (II Pet. 3:18). They need to become stronger in their faith (what God has revealed in his Word), "But you, beloved, building yourselves up on your most holy faith (Scripture)" (Jude 20).

PRINCIPLE: Growth into maturity takes a regular diet of the unadulterated Word of God.

APPLICATION: Are you growing in the grace and knowledge of Jesus the Lord? Are you stronger in

your faith today than you were a few months ago? Are you getting nourishment from the Word?

A mature person is a person who has grown up spiritually. He/she is no longer a baby (cf. I Cor 2:6; 14:20; Heb. 5:13-14).

We all know aged Christians who think like children and act like children. We have heard the expression--"dumb but happy." There are people who have been Christians for 25 years and they still think like a child. Why? They are ignorant of how Christianity applies to their life situations. This characterizes Christianity at the end of the twentieth century. So many Christians today think and act like children. The church is full of children attempting to think and act like adults. They are dumb but happy.

Every Christian should "Grow and grace and in the knowledge of our Lord Jesus Christ" (II Pet. 3:18) immediately from the point of conversion. Grace, simply put, is God's provision for our spiritual needs. Grace also connotes that God gives with no strings attached. Grace means we orient to what God does for us, not what we do for him.

Many people stay in the crib of the Christian life for nearly all their Christian experience. A person can live the Spirit-filled life and may persist in immaturity. Spirituality is not the same as maturity. Spirituality is an absolute--either we are in fellowship with God or we are not. Maturity is relative--it is a matter of degree to which we appropriate God's truth. Growth in the Christian life is a process from babyhood, to adolescence to maturity. At maturity an orientation to the upward-call takes effect.

A baby will not constantly and regularly orient to the upward-call (v.14). Occasionally he may think of the upward-call. The upward-call is an isolated thought from time to time. An attitude is life-orientation to the upward-call. This is the challenge of the next phrase--"have this in mind (attitude)."

PRINCIPLE: Maturity is growth in God's grace to the point where an orientation to the upward-call takes place.

APPLICATION: A good indication whether we are mature in Christ is our orientation to the upward-call. The upward-call is the life orientation

towards living for and meeting our Lord. Are you mature in your life-orientation?

Maturity does not come from logging in numerous years as a Christian. There are Christians who have known Christ for many years and they are still spiritual babies. It is possible to register substantial time in the Christian life and it does not mean a thing except that person is getting old.

Many people offend easily. They wear their feelings on their sleeves. This person is obviously still a baby. They do not understand the principles of God's Word nor how to apply them. Maturity is maximum application of truth to experience. If we apply God's truth regularly to our sin and failure, we will grow. If Christ becomes the center of our choices for living, we mature.

Maturity comes from two areas:

1. Growth in grace and knowledge of Jesus Christ (the truth of the Word).
2. Application of truth.

The application of what you know about God makes the difference. Two people can know the same amount of the Word. One applies one percent of what he knows and the other applies ninety percent. The one who applies 90% will grow; the other will lie dormant. The one who applies 1 % remains in babyhood. Others who occasionally apply truth to experience may reach adolescence. The believer who regularly applies truth to experience will move rapidly toward maturity.

Another characteristic of maturity is the faith factor. This is the course whereby we chose to believe the principles of God's Word. We believe that the Word can change our lives. We believe that the principle we learn from Scripture is relevant to the situation we face.

A maximum utilization of faith in God's Word produces maximum growth. The conditions to that are

1. whether we have a knowledge of the principles of the Word for that situation and,
2. whether we are exercising regular application of those principles to our life situations.

Faith relates to our confidence in God and his Word to alter our lives. Faith is the central issue in

application. The reason we do not apply is we do not believe God's Word contains the answer for our problem. We believe we control the answer. We are of the opinion that by some system of operation bootstraps we can solve our problems.

A mature believer is also one who has mutual exclusive confidence in God's provisions in his Word. Many hold a great deal of confidence in money. Others believe status symbols bestow happiness such as a house or bank account. Security depends upon whether "I get my stipend every week from the government." All these trifle the maturity process.

PRINCIPLE: Faith in God's Word is central to the maturity process.

APPLICATION: If we believe that God's Word holds the power to change us, we will utilize it to our daily experience. Does your lack of appropriation of God's principles to experience indicate lack of trust in the Word?

Now Paul turns to the reason he wants the Philippians to mature. Only mature Christians can carry mature attitudes. The Philippians were hurting each other. The bitter battle went on so long they developed negative attitudes toward each other. When a sin reaches the attitude stage it is much more difficult to correct. It takes maturity in God's Word to change an attitude. A momentum of the application of truth to experience will correct deeply rooted negative attitudes.

The word "mind" is the word attitude (cf. 2:5). This phrase is an invitation to the mature Philippians to realign their thinking orientation.

A manifestation of whether we have reached maturity is whether we change attitudes and actions. Paul challenges our attitudes.

If we keep tabs on the making of our lives, we can measure our growth. For example, the attitude "joy" can characterize the Christian life. Joy is not happiness. Happiness depends upon circumstances. Joy is an inner animation of soul regardless of circumstance. Joy is independent of circumstance. An immature Christian is a slave to his/her circumstances. If circumstances are positive, they are happy. If not, then they go down with the circumstance. Their lives undulate like a roller coaster. There is no attitude of joy.

A stable attitude comes from the application of truth to experience. This allows us to break loose from circumstances. A mature attitude means someone you love can jilt you but you will still have resources within which stabilizes you in the loss. A mature believer moves above circumstance.

PRINCIPLE: A biblical attitude is a habit of thinking like God thinks. Thinking like God thinks will displace negative attitudes. It will make us independent from circumstance.

APPLICATION: Are you independent from your circumstances? Do the set backs of your life control you? Are you controlled by hurts others have perpetrated upon you? Are your attitudes formed from Scripture rather than experience?

Having appealed to the mature Christians at Philippi to structure their attitudes around God's Word, Paul now challenges the contrary thinkers. If we let them, the contrary thinkers will hold us back from what God wants us to be. It may be our husband or wife. It might be our in-laws or team members in ministry. They do not want us to catch fire. They are afraid a spark might fall on them. They will call out the bucket brigade to douse us with water. They will do anything to cool us off spiritually.

The word "think" means to think subjectively. It simply means to hold an opinion. Here it means a contrary opinion. It is the opposite of "have this mind (attitude)." Many Christians are contrary in their thinking. They even hold contrary opinions to the Word of God. They are born inside out. They are on the negative side of every positive question and on the positive side of every negative question.

There is a point where Paul cannot straighten out contrary thinkers. Some people will never accept human authority. He simply commits them to God. God will reveal to them the importance of maturing in attitude. There is a point where we have to let the contrary people in our lives go. If we have tried our best to correct the relationship, that is all we can do. There is only one way to go with the Christian life--forward.

God's revelation is the Word of God. Eventually God will straighten out the opposition if they bring their thinking into alignment with the Word. The Word can do what no human can do.

PRINCIPLE: There are two types of thinking, one negative and the other positive. The Word of God can reorient our thinking toward a positive bearing towards people even if they do not change.

APPLICATION: Paul said that he was pressing toward the goal of the upward-call. His whole life revolved around his future meeting with the Lord Jesus. He was not going to let anything get him off track. We empower negative thinkers by allowing them to keep us from our goal.

Do you let other Christians get you off your goal? Do you stumble over other runners on the track of spirituality? When others try to deter you from your goal, do you get up off the track, brush off the cinders and move on? Do you lie there angry because someone caused you to stumble? Do you have the attitude, "I do not care who may try to hinder me. I am getting back into the race. I am moving on."

"Therefore we also, since we are surrounded by so great a cloud of witnesses (the heroes of faith listed in chapter 11), let us lay aside every weight, and the sin which so easily ensnares us, and let us run with endurance the race that is set before us.

Looking unto Jesus, the author and finisher of our faith, who for the joy that was set before Him endured the cross, despising the shame, and has sat down at the right hand of the throne of God" (Heb. 12:1,2).

Philippians 3:16

Nevertheless, to the degree that we have already attained, let us walk by the same rule, let us be of the same mind.

"Nevertheless" has the idea of "just one more thing." This brings out the main point of the maturity process under discussion. Every true Christian grows to some degree. To the extent to which we grow, we use that to grow further. Past development is the basis for future growth -- the more solid the base the more sturdy the superstructure.

The word "attained" means to arrive at. Those who have grown in Christ in Philippi have come only so far. Further growth is necessary. Once some Christians realize they have grown they neglect further growth. After growing for a while, they sidetrack from growth. The most dangerous period of human development is the adolescence period. That is the time when we think we know

everything. Little knowledge is dangerous because it deludes us into believing we have arrived.

PRINCIPLE: The Christian should develop a pattern of constantly building on past growth.

APPLICATION: Have we detected any growth in our lives? Have we built spiritual strength? We ought to be better Christians this year than we were last year. What are we eating spiritually? How do we exercise our Christian life? Are we on a spiritual diet? There does not appear to be any biblical justification for a spiritual diet! We need to eat the proper spiritual food (the Word of God). We also need the right kind of exercise. Have we leveled out in our growth? Is our growth growing on the basis of past growth?

The word "walk" connotes the idea of walking in rows or ranks. The idea is to walk orderly, walk according to a rule or order. This word was used in the military sense of walking in ranks -- walk in line, march in battle order. The idea for the Christian is that he is to walk according to the principles of a system -- the Word of God. We are to keep in step with the Word.

The "same rule" is the rule set forth in verse 14, "I press toward the goal for the prize of the upward-call of God in Christ Jesus." The word "rule" means standard. A standard is the instrument of measurement. The Bible is our instrument that measures the principles of the Christian life. We walk in rank according to the standard of the Bible. The Bible is the means of our walk. It is the instrument of progress in the Christian life. Do we hold the standard keeping our life-ambition in focus?

"Let us" occurs once in verse 15 and twice in verse 16. All three "let us" challenges go back to "I press toward the goal (v.14)." If we do not keep pressing toward the goal of the upward-call, a static ineptness will creep in our spiritual lives. If we stay static long enough we will stagnate. If we stagnate too long, spiritual dry rot will eat away at the core of our spiritual strength.

Paul again challenges the Philippians to hold an "attitude." The Bible is the absolute system of measurement for the Christian life. If there is a conflict between how I feel and what the Bible says, the Bible is always right.

An absolute criterion enables us to have confidence in life. We cannot have full confidence without absolute truth. There is a standardization of all spiritual truth. Our society is known for its many attempts at standardizing everything. This is an attempt to get a fixed criterion by which other things measure against.

Our fixed criterion is the Word. Anything that comes from God is absolute. We look upon anything absolute with askance today. We live in a relativistic society. Absolute truth "feels" wrong because everything in our society assaults it. Many people are dogmatic about things they do not understand. Others are hazy about things they should understand. Both are tragic.

PRINCIPLE: The Word of God is the standard for forming proper attitudes.

APPLICATION: If we do not continue to grow we will develop a case of arrested spiritual development. Spiritual termites will eat at our core.

Once spiritual stagnation conquers, the Christian retains little appetite for the Word of God. Capacity for spiritual things dries up. This Christian operates on 30% effectiveness. Imagine driving your car with only 30% of the cylinders working? Power for emergencies would fail us. The car would chug through traffic. Many stalls would frustrate the driver.

The stronger our attitudes the stronger the life will be. Paul challenges the Philippians to deepen their understanding of the Word so that they can free themselves from negative attitudes toward others and develop the positive attitude of Jesus (2:5). Are your attitudes changing positively toward others by the absolute standard of the Word?

Philippians 3:17

Brethren, join in following my example, and note those who so walk, as you have us for a pattern.

Dynamic spiritual growth to some is merely a fanciful ideal. They wonder if real people live vital lives like this. "Are there any real people out there who put flesh and blood on this kind of life?" Paul here gives himself as an example.

Paul never presents himself as some super-saint who lives above ordinary people. In this verse

Paul expects other ordinary people like him to follow in his tracks.

The word "following" in the Greek is the term from which we get "mimic" in the English. Paul says, "If you want to grow, mimic me." This word is more than just mimic, it means to be a "joint-mimic." Join others in imitating Paul.

Could you honestly tell another believer to mimic the growth in your life? Paul was an outstanding exponent of the growth of God's grace in a man's life.

Paul began as a murderer of Christians. He became the author of over one half of the New Testament. He went from the most feared antagonist of Christianity to its greatest protagonist. From perpetrating "havoc" on the church he advanced to the point of the greatest advocate of Christianity.

Paul presented himself as a living example of dynamic growth, "For though you might have ten thousand instructors in Christ, yet you do not have many fathers; for in Christ Jesus I have begotten you through the gospel. Therefore I urge you, imitate me" (I Cor. 4:15,16). Later in the same epistle he said, "Imitate me, just as I also imitate Christ" (11:1). He did not say imitate me in every respect. He said, "Imitate me to the degree I imitate Christ. So far as Christ is reflected in my life, follow me."

PRINCIPLE: Everyone influences someone.

APPLICATION: Because everyone influences someone this puts us in a precarious place. We need to watch our step. Our children are watching us. They follow our foot steps. They listen to us when we disagree. They notice when their parents have "roast preacher" for supper. They observe when you criticize the music. They have such big ears when you pass gossip as truth. They will adopt your critical spirit. If you are bitter they will become bitter. If you are censorious of other Christians, they will pick up the habit. If you criticize the church, they may not go when they are older. You say little good about church so they assume little worth in church. They will be just like you are. They throw a ball like their father and they will criticize like their father.

What kind of example are you setting for your children? Do your children see growth in your spiritual life? They watch you like a hawk. They

have big ears. What are you indirectly teaching them? They are trying to discern whether you are all mouth. They ask, "Are my parents for real?"

In the first phrase Paul gave himself as an example to follow. Here he encourages the Philippians to follow those who follow Paul's example.

The word "note" is a military word meaning to reconnoiter, to look, watch or mark. Paul challenges the Philippians to reconnoiter the array of Christians in their purview to detect growing Christians.

Paul is not the only person to follow. There are others. "Keep your eye on dynamic, growing Christians." In another passage Paul challenges the Thessalonians to not only follow him but others, "And you became followers of us and of the Lord, having received the word in much affliction, with joy of the Holy Spirit" (I Thess. 1:6).

Mature believers live life with a capital "L." They extend their Christian lives far beyond existence from one Sunday service to another. Christianity to them is more than religion. It is beyond putting on a Sunday garment. The Thessalonians followed Paul and his companions by receiving "the word in much affliction." Paul says, "If you follow me, you might go to jail as well." "Oh, I did not figure on that!" The Christian life might cost us something. It is not an easy life. It is a blessed but not easy.

The Thessalonians looked upon Paul and his associates as the best Christians they knew. You are the best Christian some people know. You may be the only Christian some people know. People in your sphere of influence judge all Christians by you. They never met a better Christian than you so they figure every other Christian is worse than you.

"Remember those who rule over you, who have spoken the word of God to you, whose faith follow, considering the outcome of their conduct" (Heb. 13:7). As a Christian in general, and as a Christian leader in particular, like it or not, right or wrong, people look at the conduct of a leader more scrupulously. They expect things of leaders they cannot provide in their own strength.

As you have us for a pattern

"Philippians, do you want an example of how to imitate Christ? Follow our team. The character of Christ blooms in us."

The word "pattern" means to strike by a blow. It is the impression left after the blow. It is that which forms a pattern after a thing is made. The word comes to mean example.

Examples are hard to come by in our day. Some Christian leaders assault the idea of a "pattern" or example in our day. They so forfeit their credibility it affects the credibility of all Christian leaders. This undermines spiritual authority in Christianity. It attacks the credibility of Christianity itself.

PRINCIPLE: It is our responsibility to sort out the growing, dynamic Christians from the dead and dull Christians. We are to associate with those who are growing.

APPLICATION: Do you mark out others in your purview who are growing Christians? Do you imitate weak Christians? Baby Christians? "Well, everyone in our group are indifferent to spiritual things." Then find someone who is alive spiritually. In the spiritual sphere the crowd is usually wrong.

Are you making a contribution to the credibility of Christianity?

Philippians 3:18

For many walk of whom I have told you often, and now tell you even weeping, that they are the enemies of the cross of Christ.

Verses 18 and 19 discuss the enemies of the cross. The chapter closes like it began, "Beware of dogs, beware of evil workers, beware of the mutilation" (3:2). To be forewarned is to be forearmed.

For many walk of whom I have told you often

In verse 17 Paul encouraged the Philippians to mark out those who are mature. Mature believers live on earth as if they were already in heaven (v.20). Now by graphic contrast he sets forth the flip side--those who detract from growth. The negative crowd we run with influences our values.

This is a major problem for teenagers who are in the "identity crisis." They gain their identity from what others in their group think about them. Teens are vulnerable to the crowd. When they are by themselves they seem to be fine. When they run with the crowd that is another story. They are easily led. Group pressure sweeps them along in values they would not otherwise hold. If they get into the right crowd where they can see living, flesh and blood, examples of those who walk with the Lord, the impact will be for good.

Paul reminded the Philippians many times of those who would detract from their lives. He told them "often." Paul employed "redundancy" as a valuable device. Leadership takes responsibility to constantly warn their followers of danger.

PRINCIPLE: Good leadership identifies negative influences and structures countervailing principles into the people they lead.

APPLICATION: As a leader in your home, do you forewarn your family about negative influences? Peer pressure cannot transcend fifteen years of values inculcated into the life. If our teens are secure enough in themselves that they can stand against the crowd, they have reached a maturity beyond most. If we are to build teens who are independent of social pressure, we need to communicate biblical convictions at a young age. We need many young men and women who, like Daniel, dare to stand alone.

And now tell you even weeping

Here is a man who could both take a strong stand and still exercise compassionate. That is a difficult balance to maintain. Either we are hard and immovable or weak and flexible. A mature person holds both conviction and flexibility in tension. Paul was inflexible with foundational truth. Yet he was compassionate with people--"even weeping."

"He who continually goes forth weeping,

Bearing seed for sowing,

Shall doubtless come again with rejoicing,

Bringing his sheaves with him" (Ps. 126:6).

"Serving the Lord with all humility, with many tears and trials..." (Ac 20:19).

"Therefore watch, and remember that for three years I did not cease to warn everyone night and day with tears" (Ac 20:31).

Paul wept over those who do not know Christ as Savior. Weeping is no longer in vogue. We live in a day of stingy compassion. We do not have any passion because we do not have any compassion. We develop hardness to the lost and the reality of hell. Therefore, we do little, if anything, to introduce people to Jesus.

Paul wrote a stinging letter to the carnal Corinthians, yet he shows compassion to them in II Corinthians 2:4, "For out of much affliction and anguish of heart I wrote to you, with many tears, not that you should be grieved, but that you might know the abundant love which I have so abundantly for you".

Paul even wept over apostates in our passage. All this adds up to Paul's love for people. Oh, we love our mother, father and children. We love our husband or wife. Even that is difficult at times. To love someone outside our personal sphere is another thing. That "thing" is maturity.

That they are the enemies of the cross of Christ

The phrase "the enemies of the cross of Christ" repulse those who love the Lord Jesus. The "enemy" opposes the cross. The cross is God's work. It stands in contradiction to human merit. People adverse to God's glory hate the cross, "For if when we were enemies we were reconciled to God through the death of his Son, much more, having been reconciled, we shall be saved by His life" (Rom. 5:10). Before we came to know Christ we were the "enemies" of God. "And you, who once were alienated and enemies in your mind by wicked works, yet now He has reconciled" (Col 1:21). Our works alienate us from God, even good works, if they are done in the flesh. "Because the carnal mind (the unbeliever) is enmity against God; for it is not subject to the law of God (the Bible), nor indeed can be (does not have the capacity)" (Rom. 8:7).

Not only are those without Christ enemies of God but they are enemies of the cross. "For the message of the cross is foolishness to those who are perishing, but to us who are being saved it is the power of God" (I Co. 1:18). The cross is offensive to those who have not embraced its message, "And I,

brethren, if I still preach circumcision, why do I still suffer persecution? Then the offense of the cross has ceased" (Gal. 5:11). Enemies of the cross allege they go to heaven without the cross. They belittle the work of Christ on the cross. They believe God is impressed by works.

PRINCIPLE: Both truth and compassion must be held in tension.

APPLICATION: Do you balance principle and passion? Do you engage both passion and compassion at the same time? Is there balance in your life? Paul loved people so much he shed tears for them. No wonder he became the greatest missionary of his time. Do you love people beyond your immediate friends and family? The standard of this verse is transcending love.

Philippians 3:19

Whose end is destruction, whose God is their belly, and whose glory is in their shame - who set their mind on earthy things.

Paul sets forth a striking four-fold description of the "enemies of the cross of Christ." It is difficult to determine whether these people are renegade believers or hostile unbelievers.

Whose end is destruction

The first portrait of these rebels depicts their "end"--"destruction". The word "end" does not mean cessation of existence. It portrays the issue and course of action of their lives.

Their religion seems feasible: Be a good neighbor, pay your debts, join the P.T.A. Those are earmarks of a good citizen but not of a good Christian necessarily. We may unpack all our obligations to our fellow man but this will not impress God. The horizontal is not the issue with God but the perpendicular.

On the other hand their religion may comprise more spice, "If you join us we put no limits on your sex life..." A certain popular philosophy in the first century believed it was man's duty to plum the depth of sin just as much as it is to scale the heights of virtue. Sin was their duty. By living at both ends of virtue and sin their experience is complete.

"Destruction" is not annihilation or extinction in the Bible. The word connotes the idea of "waste"

or "ruin." A person who is an enemy of the cross ends in ruin. They are not annihilated. At death they do not slip into an eternal unconsciousness. They continue to exist but they wreck the quality of life either in time or eternity. They know nothing of God's quality of life. Their end is more than termination; it is a state of moral ruin. "Destruction" essentially has to do with separation from God.

Whose god is their belly

The second characteristic of these haters of the cross is their "god is their belly." Their god was their appetite. "For those who are such do not serve our Lord Jesus Christ, but their own belly..." (Rom. 16:18). These people are not atheists. They have a god. It is their appetite. They are their own god. There is no true atheist. Most atheists bow before their own brain. They worship self. They are self indulgent. They sit in judgment of the Bible. Their god is made up of what they can taste, smell, see, hear and feel. Their god is made of what their finite brains can understand. They invent their own god. They manufacture gods of

Christians live lives of practical atheism. They savor self indulgence. Christians manufacture gods of their wife, husband or children.. Others worship their business or job. A great god to many believers is the mighty dollar. Their god is their belly. A man's god is that to which he wholly gives himself. His god is what drives him.

PRINCIPLE: Ruin is the end of a self-indulgent philosophy of life.

APPLICATION: What drives you? The dollar? Sex? Good causes such as your family, career? Is God the central purpose for your existence?

The third and fourth characteristics of the haters of the cross show further belief systems.

And whose glory is in their shame

Some people brag about their shame. Their shame is their glory. They obtain popularity by their own disgrace. To glory in shame is a pitiful view of life. People are proud that they are immoral. They do not mind parading their brazen, blatant sin before millions on national television programs. Homosexuals march in "coming out" parades. "Having their understanding darkened, being alienated

from the life of God, because of the ignorance that is in them, because of the blindness of their heart" (Eph. 4:18). They do not blush anymore. Their sense of right and wrong blunts their view of God. They delight in distortion of life. Liberty becomes a panacea. They tolerate no restraint on their desires.

Lying is regarded today as good business practice. Students deem cheating acceptable so long as it contributes to their graduation. The end justifies the means. It is all right to cheat, lie and deceive providing it is for a good cause.

Young anarchists run the streets of our nations. Children kill children. We teach them social graces but scorn directing their morals.

God created man in his own image to reflect his glory. Man was designed to reflect the attributes of God. The cauterize soul obscures the reflected glory of God.

Who set their mind on earthy things

This phrase is a summary of their orientation to life. The word "mind" conveys the idea of "attitude." Their attitude toward life is human viewpoint. They have a horizontal view of life rather than the perpendicular view of life (God's view of life recorded in his Word). They look at life from the human viewpoint rather than the divine viewpoint. They embrace the standards of a world without God.

PRINCIPLE: Human viewpoint always leads to devaluation of eternal values. Divine viewpoint always influences both perpendicular and horizontal values.

APPLICATION: The Word of God no longer stimulates a conscience dead in sin. Have you been out of fellowship so long that you no longer come under conviction of sin? Are you so embedded in the standards of this world that God is no longer real to you?

If you do not know Christ personally, where do you stand in relation to the cross of Christ? On which side are you? Pro or con? For or against?

Philippians 3:20

For our citizenship is in heaven, from which we also eagerly wait for the Savior, the Lord Jesus Christ.

This verse is a contrast to those whose "end is destruction" (v.19). The Christian has hope.

Hope is an encouraging word. Christians have a bright future no matter what misfortune they face in this life. The appropriation of hope brings blessing into the soul. Those who take little consciousness of hope diminish their souls.

Canada permits citizenship in two countries simultaneously. The Christian has dual citizenship as well. The seat of a Christian's citizenship is in heaven. . The Christian has citizenship both here and there.

Philippi was a Roman colony. At strategic military zones throughout the world Rome set up colonies. These colonies were not settled in remote areas of the world but in strategic territories. They were placed at the major highways, crucial mountain passes where armies might march. Their citizens were mostly soldiers. If they served in the colony for twenty-one years they received their Roman citizenship.

A great distinction of these Roman colonies was they remained part of Rome. Roman dress was sported whether they lived in Greece or Israel. Roman governors ruled these cities. They spoke Latin. Roman justice and morals were executed. They never forgot they were citizens of Rome. They remained unalterably and permanently Roman even to the ends of the earth.

Many in the church were Roman citizens. They lived in Greece but their citizenship was in Rome. They immediately understood Paul's analogy. They have a citizenship on earth but they have another in heaven. They were never to forget they were citizens of heaven. Their conduct was to match their citizenship. Wherever a Christian is, he must never forget he represents his citizenship in heaven.

God has colonies scattered all over the world. They are patches of heaven on earth. They live under the principles and ideals of heaven. Our interests are heaven. Speaking of Abraham the author of Hebrews says, "For he waited for the

city which has foundations, whose builder and maker is God" (Heb. 11:10).

We perform an important function on earth while we are here. God has placed us on earth to glorify him here in time. We should vote and pay our taxes. We should become involved in the affairs of time. However, we should not allow our citizenship here to put our citizenship there in the shade. There is a fine balance between these two citizenships. Some are so heavenly minded they are no earthly good. On the other hand we do not restrict citizenship functions to time.

"Our citizenship is in heaven" contrast to "mind earthly things" (v.19). This contrasts Christians who make a god out of self-indulgence ("belly"). One day we will go home. To anticipate heaven from our "colony" here on earth focuses on our fully restored fellowship with God. To become exclusively involved in the colony of earth deprives the believer of his hope. If we only champion the causes of time, we lose sight of home. If we lose sight of eternal perspective. We no longer represent our citizenship. We polish the brass rail of a sinking ship. If we restrict ourselves to the interests of time to make ourselves more comfortable, we prostitute our purpose as a colony dweller. Our purpose is to represent eternity in time.

PRINCIPLE: Hope is indeed a word of encouragement. We are a colony of heaven on earth. We represent heaven on earth.

APPLICATION: We ought to have a great interest in heaven because Jesus is there. "Where Jesus is, 'tis heaven there." The moment we received Jesus Christ as our personal Savior we took out citizenship papers. We were not natural-born citizens of heaven. We must be born into that citizenship. We are born into our native country. When we are born again we are born into the heavenly citizenship.

As citizens of heaven we represent more than those who are citizens of heaven after death. We are to live as citizens of heaven now in time on earth. Heaven is a reality in time among the citizens of heaven. As a colony of heaven we represent home to aliens all about us. We are in the world but not of the world. We are in the world but not of its values. We live under the principles of heaven. We are a patch of heaven on earth.

Anticipation is a component of hope. A student applies to what she believes is an ideal university. Day by day she runs to the mail box to see if she has been accepted in the university of her first choice. That is eager anticipation. The words "eagerly wait for" here connotes far more than anticipation.

From which we also eagerly wait for

The words "from which" means from heaven where we have our citizenship. Instead of looking for the arrival of a monarch from earth the Christian eagerly anticipates his Monarch from heaven.

"Eagerly wait for" is one word in the Greek. It is double compound word made up of three Greek words. The words are "from" and "out" and "wait." The word "from" indicates withdrawal of one's attention from other matters. We need to concentrate on his coming. The second word "out" intensifies the concentration. So far we have a person who is intensely concentrating on the coming of his Monarch. The third part of the word is the word "wait." "Wait" means "receive" or "welcome." This speaks of welcoming reception. The accumulation of all three of these words means this person is intensely concentrating on giving Monarch Jesus a welcoming reception.

To put this idea in physical terms let us return to the girl waiting for the mail. She steps out of the house, leans out the door and stretches her neck out to look down the street to see if the mailman is coming. She is on the tiptoe of anticipation.

"Eagerly wait for" denotes standing on the tiptoe of expectancy waiting for the return of the Lord Jesus. This is far more than casual interest. It is intense yearning. Christians eagerly anticipate Jesus for whom they yearn.

The Savior, the Lord Jesus Christ

Attention is drawn from everything else and focused exclusively upon the Lord. Full designation of his names "the Savior, the Lord Jesus Christ" converges upon his person and work. We intensely concentrate upon welcoming our Monarch King Jesus' person because of his work when he returns.

PRINCIPLE: The focus of Christianity is upon Jesus Christ. A cardinal principle of Christian living is to be Christ-centered.

APPLICATION: Are you in love with the Lord Jesus? Do you anticipate seeing him? Do you long to see him? On the other hand, is Jesus a necessary nuisance and inconvenience to your life? If the latter is true, deep spiritual aberration has seeped into your soul. Not only should Jesus be important to us, he should be the core, the center of our lives. Do you anticipate seeing him any day now? He may come momentarily.

"If anyone does not love the Lord Jesus Christ, let him be accursed. O LORD, come!" (I Cor. 16:23).

Philippians 3:21

Who will transform our lowly body that it may be conformed to his glorious body, according to the working by which he is able even to subdue all things to himself.

This passage describes two changes in our physical body at death or the rapture. Our bodies will be "transformed" and "conformed."

Who will transform our lowly body

At Christ's return he will "transform" the Christian's mortal body so that it will conform to the resurrection body. The word "transform" means to change in fashion. The outward appearance is changed. At this transformation these bodies of ours will be free from sin. Our outer casing will change at the rapture or resurrection of the body.

"Lowly body" is body of lowliness. This term calls attention to the weakness of the body. Presently our bodies are susceptible to disease, fatigue, age, accident and death. Our bodies were made low by the fall of Adam. Adam's mind before the fall functioned perfectly but afterward became disabled. As a result, all Adam's sons carry imperfect bodies with them every day. This body humiliates us.

All of that will change at the rapture of living believers and the resurrection of those who previously died. These bodies will be transformed into "glorified" bodies which will reflect life in eternity. We will trade in this body for a resurrected body. In the mean time we need to take care of it, it must last until the resurrection. It is like maintaining a

garden. If we do not weed regularly they will take over the garden. If we do not take care of the body the "weeds" will take over. This body is a mortal body. It is dying while we live. Those of us who have passed thirty know it. We get an inkling of it when we pass 20. We know it for sure when we pass 40!!

The first resurrection (for believers) and the rapture take place at the same time. There will be no glorified body for those without Christ. They are stuck with the body they have.

PRINCIPLE: Our physical bodies have a glorious future beginning at the first resurrection.

APPLICATION: Although our bodies are subject to sin, disease and death they have a glorious future. We have a body of humiliation at the present time. It humiliates us! It loses teeth and hair. Eyes dim. Limbs lose their function. It is humiliating to die. However, there is a difference between humiliation and glory. In the future we are going to have a body of glory. It will be like the glorified, resurrected body of the Lord Jesus.

The second description of our body in eternity is described in the second verb--"conformed to his glorious body."

That it may be conformed

"Conformed" is to have the same form as (cf. This same term is used in Rom 8:29 (spiritual conformity into the image of Christ). After Christ transforms the earthly appearance of our body it will "conform" to the body of Christ. Our body will correspond to the resurrected body of Christ. Then the regenerated person's body will truly reflect his status with Christ.

Our bodies will change but people will recognize us. It will be recognizable just like the resurrected body of the Lord Jesus was recognized by the disciples after the resurrection. In heaven people will recognize us.

To his glorious body

This is the body of Jesus' resurrection and ascension. Jesus is glorified in his resurrection body. Our body will be like his resurrection body. Our original body is not permanent but our glorified body is permanent. Our original body falls apart. Health diehards try to slow the process down but they only blunt the process. The process is inevi-

table. If your genes are in the orb of a Rolls Royce then you may live a few more years than others but only a few. If your genes are in the sphere of a Ford then you may have to replace parts sooner than others! I should have said "Chevy" because I drive a Ford! Even the best bodies wear out. But we will receive a body by grace that will never wear out.

We are only in this temporary body to fulfill a plan while we are on earth. Once that mission is fulfilled then God promotes us to heaven in a glorified body. If disease has attacked your body, remember that there will be "no more pain" in eternity. There will be no ache or pain or limitation there. Pain is only temporary in God's economy.

According to the working by which he is able to subdue all things to himself

The word "working" indicates effective working. God will effectively bring all things under the authority of Christ in his resurrected body. This term is always used of supernatural working in the New Testament.

The words "according to" means according to a standard. God works according to his own standard. God's standard devised a human body for eternity that is perfect. We do not receive our glorified body by our standards. We do not get a body according to how well we lived on earth. It is not according to the standard of merit. If we had to merit our glorified body it would probably hunch over with arthritis!!

The subjecting power is that of Christ. He will subdue "all things" to himself. Elsewhere the Father subdues all things to the Son (I Cor. 15:25).

"Subdue" is a military word meaning to bring under the command of the proper authority. "All things" is the entire universe. The entire universe will be brought under the command of the Lord Jesus. Then he will be King Jesus, King of the world. He will reign in all his sovereignty.

PRINCIPLE: Our bodies will conform to the resurrected body of Christ at the first resurrection.

APPLICATION: Christ is glorified in his resurrection body. We will be glorified in our resurrection body. Our body will match our soul in heaven.

Our soul will stand free from sin and the effects of sin. We will have a body to match!

Philippians 4:1-5

Therefore, my beloved brethren whom I long {to see}, my joy and crown, so stand firm in the Lord, my beloved.

I urge Euodia and I urge Syntyche to live in harmony in the Lord.

Indeed, true comrade, I ask you also to help these women who have shared my struggle in {the cause of} the gospel, together with Clement also, and the rest of my fellow workers, whose names are in the book of life.

Rejoice in the Lord always; again I will say, rejoice!

Let your gentleness be known to all men. The Lord is at hand.

Gentleness in our society often means weakness or prissiness. This is not what Paul is asking here. This command relates to the running feud between Euodia and Syntyche. We must see "gentleness" here in the context of division in the local church. It deals with how we treat other people.

Let your gentleness

The Greek word is broader than our English word "gentleness." There is no single English word which can translate this word adequately. The word conveys ideas such as graciousness and clemency. Probably the closest English word is "forbearance." It is sweet reasonableness toward others. After all is said, the word involves the willingness to yield our personal rights. This word connotes the willingness to show consideration to others. This person is reasonable when they look at the facts of a case. It is the opposite of self-seeking and contention.

Euodia and Syntyche tried to remold each other. They were two different people. Each person wanted the other to be like them. They tried to put the round peg in a square hole. The issue was personal preference or personal taste, not principle. These two women were trying to remold each other into their own image. Each lady had a mold into which they were trying to pour other person. If the mold does not fit they try to force her into it. Euodia may have had a square mold. She was par-

ticular and punctilious. Syntyche had a round mold. She tried to make Euodia fit the round mold.

The word "gentleness" submits the need for flexibility, pliability. We are not married long before flexibility becomes an important mode of operation. We cannot always have our own way. When that little baby comes along, we develop yet more flexibility. It does not take long till we become very relaxed. That baby interrupts our program; we have to change our schedule frequently. Our time is not our own. We have to yield to the desires of someone else.

Are you sensitive? Touchy? Do you take things the wrong way? Are you always spoiling for a fight? People at your work are like that. They are quick to take offense. Soon you do not dare open your mouth to them because they take every thing personally. They misinterpret everything. They cannot take a joke. You avoid them and they wonder why. We have to carry their feelings around on a pillow.

PRINCIPLE: A forbearing person does not treat people on the basis of what they deserve.

APPLICATION: Some husbands try to remake their wives. Some wives try to remake their husbands. They have tried it for thirty years and they still have not succeeded yet. We cannot make everyone comply with our pattern of life. We set up the pattern. If everyone does not fit into that pattern we conflict with them. Everyone has preferences. We have rights about which car to buy, style of dress. That is a matter of personal taste. Some women wear ghastly hats. That is their choice. We have to learn to keep a poker face in these things! Keep neutral. Make allowances.

Let your gentleness be known

Forbearance means to think grace toward other people. It means to have a gracious mental attitude. A person who thinks grace will not treat people on the basis of what they deserve. If we did, we would be in conflict very quickly. We will constantly knock heads with other people.

Gentleness was a trait of Christ's character, "Now I, Paul, myself and pleading with you by the meekness and gentleness of Christ..." (II Cor. 10:1) It is the third of the qualities of God's wisdom in

James 3:17, "But the wisdom that is from above is first pure, then peaceable, gentle, willing to yield, full of mercy and good fruits, without partiality and without hypocrisy." It is a characteristic of a Christian leader, (I Tim. 3:3).

The word "known" means knowledge that is experienced. Let this forbearance manifest itself in your experience. Don't hide it; let it out, advertise it. Be noted for your forbearance. May everyone know that the characteristic of your life is to give deference to others. This is foreign to the way the world operates. It may shock them if they see it.

"I don't mind working in that department but I won't work with her." "I'll work here but I won't work with him. He is too sticky. He wears his feelings on his sleeve." If you are the kind of person who people must carry around on a pillow because you bruise easily, you are a baby Christian.

To all men

It is one thing to release our rights to some people but it is another thing to relinquish them to "all men." A spirit which does not demand its own way disarms others.

Most people in our day believe in the strong arm, the power to influence. Non-Christians can be agreeable if, if, if they have their own way. If you cross him--look out. Sad to say many Christians act just like them.

PRINCIPLE: God wants us to make known to others our attitude of giving deference to other people. This is a gracious mental attitude.

APPLICATION: Are you a reasonable person? Maybe you are an obstinate individual? A "forbearing" person is fair and goes beyond the letter of the law. The grace of giving up one's rights for a greater cause will resolve conflict in the church. Someone took the initiative. Someone was willing to yield for the sake of the ministry. Are we willing to look at a problem from the other person's point of view. Are we willing to give up our rights out of deference and love? This is the exact opposite of contention and self-seeking of Euodia and Syntyche. They reacted to each other in a harsh way.

The lord is at hand

This is a reference to the coming of Christ. Verse four set forth the impact of the presence of Christ

in our daily lives. This verse presents the impact of Christ at his coming. Christians have a glorious prospect of meeting Jesus face to face in time on earth.

When Jesus comes and we stand before him at the Judgment Seat of Christ, he will judge truly. He will settle all differences. That will make our differences seem like trifles.

James 5:8,9 combines the long suffering spirit and the coming of Christ, "You also be patient. Establish your hearts, for the coming of the Lord is at hand. Do no grumble against one another, brethren, lest you be condemned. Behold the judge is standing at the door!." Jesus is right at the door. He may lay hold of the door knob at any minute. We wait for a Savior. Do not grudge against your brother. If we do, we may have to bury the hatchet publicly. Now we can do it privately.

The words "at hand" mean near, imminent. This means more than the Lord is omnipresent. The idea is Lord may come while we are giving someone a piece of our mind. He may come at any minute. He may come and catch us red handed telling someone what we think of them. We may get caught right in the act. Because the Lord may come, we need to keep short accounts with other people and with the Lord.

How gracious are we with other Christians? How much flexibility is there in our lives? Can we get along with other people? We all have different personalities. No two of us are alike. Can we accept the differences of other people on that board upon which we serve? Does everything have to be done your way? Are you always negative at the board meetings? Are we willing to put our differences in the Lord's hands at the Judgment Seat of Christ? The greatest incentive for holy living is the imminent return of the Lord Jesus to earth.

Many of us are nice as long as we can have our own way. As long as your husband can have his own way he oozes with personality. When you cross him, he acts like a spoiled child. Some Christians have a case of arrested spiritual development. How do we act when someone crosses us? We act like a spoiled child. As Christians we live far below our privileges.

Are you a flexible, pliable person? Are you flexible where there is no fundamental doctrine or principle at stake? Do you have the capacity to give?

Are you hard to get along with? Do you drive a hard bargain? Must you always have your own way? There is far too much of that in all of us.

Whether we like it or not, it is difficult to be honest with ourselves. It is easy to be honest with other people. We can see their problems quickly. It is difficult to see our own flaws. We cannot see ourselves as others see us.

People have us catalogued. They know whether we are easy to get along with. They know if we are a difficult person to serve on that committee.

PRINCIPLE: If we live our lives in the light of the coming of Christ, we will forbear other people.

APPLICATION: Are you sensitive? Do you carry a chip on your shoulder? Are you touchy? Are you always spoiling for a fight? Some folks are born that way. They are quick to take offense. They always take things the wrong way. Soon we do not dare open our mouth for fear we may offend them. They misinterpret everything. They cannot take a joke. We avoid them like the plague and they wonder why.

Philippians 4:6

Be anxious for nothing, but in everything by prayer and supplication, with thanksgiving, let your requests be made known to God.

This is the third principle for untangling broken relationships. The first principle is to orient to the Lord--"Rejoice in the Lord." The second principle is the principle of deference -- "Let your gentleness be known to all men." Now we come to the third principle for resolving deep hurts among people.

Be anxious for nothing

Anxiety is the source of much conflict in our lives. If we feel insecure about ourselves we warp our relationships with others. All of us retain vulnerable areas about which we like to worry. If someone steps into that area, a strong possibility of conflict exists.

Anxiety is a form of fear. It is the fear of being placed in suspension between two points. Anxiety is apprehension or worry about what may happen either good or bad. We do not know if the good will come about. We do not know if the bad will occur. We hang in uncertainty as we suspend be-

tween the good and the bad. This is anxiety, the fear of uncertainty. Some people would rather encounter the bad predicament rather than suspend in insecurity. Uncertainty to them is worse of all bad things that could possibly happen. Security is the core value above all else.

Anxiety is a sin because it demonstrates a lack of confidence in the sovereignty of God to deal with our concerns. It is only after we tie ourselves in a knot that we realize apprehension is sin. It is a besetting sin to some Christians. It enfeebles the soul. It ruffles the temper. It is a manifestation of mistrust. It distracts from communion with God.

The words "be anxious for nothing" convey three ideas in the original language.

1. It is a command. It is our responsibility by our volition not to enter into anxiety.
2. We are to regularly use our will to not allow fear of uncertainty to envelop us. We are to stop the habit of constantly worrying.

Anxiety fear is unacceptable because it fails to place confidence in God about the uncertainties of life. There is no reason for a child of God to worry because God manages his life.

APPLICATION: The sin of anxiety closely connects to lack of confidence in God. The more we accept God's sovereign hand upon the uncertainties of life, the less apprehensive we are about life. We are less insecure. An insecure person is vulnerable to what others think about them. Security in God's plan for us gives us an independence from what others think about us. Do you worry about the tense relationships in your life? Have you placed problem people in the hands of God? At least you have dealt with one half of the problem -- yourself.

The word "anxious" is the common word in the gospels for harassing care. "Therefore I say to you, do not worry about your life, what you will eat or what you will drink; nor about your body, what you will put on." (Mt. 6:25). "So why do you worry about clothing? Consider the lilies of the field, how they grow: they neither toil nor spin." (Mt. 6:28). "Therefore do not worry, saying 'What shall we eat?' or 'what shall we drink' or 'What shall we wear?' (Mt. 6:31). "Therefore do not worry about tomorrow, for tomorrow will worry about its own

things. Sufficient for the day is its own trouble" (Mt.6:34).

Worry is a device of the devil. It is a sin that assaults a proper view of the person and work of God. We worry due to a sense of inadequacy. So we try to bring circumstances under our control. We ultimately come to the conclusion we cannot bring life under our control. When we realize that we cannot bring circumstances under our control we worry. If we do not have the funds to pay our bills, we worry. When someone asks us to do something beyond what we feel is our capacity, we worry. A student will worry about exams when he is not prepared. Some students will worry about exams even if they are prepared.

PRINCIPLE: Worry is the attempt to predict the future. It is an attempt to control circumstances. It plays the role of God.

APPLICATION: Worry is futile because it never changes anything. However, trust in God's sovereignty will change us. It will free us from anxiety. The issue is no longer our adequacy but God's adequacy.

I Peter 5:7 is a parallel verse to Philippians 4:6, "Casting all your care upon Him, for He cares for you." The word "care" is the same word as our word "anxious." We are to cast our anxiety upon the Lord. Unload it all.

The key word in I Peter 5:7 is the word "for." "For" means "because." The reason we can cast is because we know God cares about us. Casting in itself does not relieve worry. The reason we cast is the point of the verse. Knowledge of God's care allows us to cast.

Psalm 55:22, "Cast your burden on the LORD, And He shall sustain you;

He shall never permit the righteous to be moved"

The psalmist saw that there are things too great for us to carry. David referred to those things as "burdens." He never denied that trouble would come. He only asserted what to do when trouble comes. The child of God is to transfer that burden upon the Lord.

Psalm 37: 1,3,4,5 "Do not fret because of evildoers, Nor be envious of the workers of iniquity

Trust in the LORD, and do good; Dwell in the land, and feed on His faithfulness. Delight your-

self also in the LORD, And He shall give you the desires of your heart. Commit your way to the LORD, Trust also in Him, And He shall bring it to pass."

Committing one's way to the Lord is the same as "casting." The word "commit" means to "roll off." Let your burdens roll onto the Lord. This is the picture of a man carrying a great load. It is too heavy for him. He needs to let it roll off him onto the Lord. Faith believes God capable to bear what we cannot. He will, if we give him the opportunity.

PRINCIPLE: We dispel anxiety by giving them to the Lord. If we know that God cares for us we can give them to him.

APPLICATION: Have you cast your anxieties on the Lord and then take them back? The reason we do is because we believe that the act of casting is the important point of I Peter 5:7. However, the crucial point of the verse is our confidence in God's care for us. If we have confidence in that, we will truly cast our anxieties upon him.

The word "nothing" means "not one thing." We are to worry about "not one thing." It is emphatic in the sentence. Stop worrying about even one thing. Worry will short circuit our fellowship with God.

Anxiety indicates we do not trust in the sovereignty of God. "And we know that all things work together for good to those who love God, to those who love God, to those who are the called according to His purpose" (Rom 8:28). Does God have his hand on the reigns of the universe? We think that worry will help God manage the universe.

Do we exercise faith in connection to our problems? Do you worry about "not one thing"? You say, "Yes, that is me, I never worry about anything." We would all question the veracity of that statement. We say, "I do not worry, I just get a little exercised at times." That is how we rename worry. Folks rationalize sin by explaining it away.

No one can do our fretting for us; we do it to ourselves. We permit our mind to be troubled and upset. We worry about our bills, our children, our health, our business. Our motto is: "Why pray when we can worry." "I gave my problems to the Lord but I took them back.." All they wanted to do was to get out of the jam. All they want from God is an aspirin.

We cannot worry and claim the promises at the same time. Worry and faith are mutually exclusive. They cannot coexist. Faith in faith is not biblical faith. Faith in the Bible always has an object. We can trust God because he has given us a principle or promise. He has made a verbal commitment to us and we can trust him for the fulfillment of it (Is 41:10; Ps 55:22; I John 1:9). Belief requires something concrete.

PRINCIPLE: If we worry about any area of our lives, that area does not operate under faith in God's promises.

APPLICATION: When you confess your sin do you have a gnawing feeling that you are not forgiven? Is there an anxiety about whether God accepts you back? This is an issue of trust in God's promises such as I John 1:9, "If we confess our sins, He is faithful and just to forgive us our sins and to cleanse us from all unrighteousness."

But in everything by prayer

"But"--strong contrast. In counter distinction to worry, pray about it. "Everything" cancels "nothing" out. Pray about everything. Be anxious about nothing. Bring every single thing to the Lord in prayer: Little things, big things, medium-sized things, trivial things, gigantic things. Nothing is too large to pray about; nothing is too small to pray about. So "everything" is a corollary to "nothing" in the phrase "Be anxious for nothing."

Prayer is always a faith exercise. The remedy for worry is prayer. People who worry the most pray the least. "In everything" means in every circumstance of life. There is nothing that we face in life we cannot take to God. Prayer is the mechanic of placing our needs in God's hands. When we believe God's Word that he meets us in our need, we pray.

It is one thing to know worry is wrong. It is another thing to stop worrying. After the command ("Be anxious for nothing") comes the solution. The solution to worry is to recognize that we cannot solve many of the apprehensions we face, only God can. When we worry we deny God's sovereignty. We assume that sovereignty to ourselves. If God is not sovereign we better worry. If God is alive and well, there is no need to worry.

The word "everything" suggests that there is no situation that we face not open to God's interest. "Everything" is a term of panacea. Prayer is a panacea for anything we face. People say there are no panaceas anymore. God teaches us that there is a panacea in prayer.

PRINCIPLE: There is nothing about which we cannot pray. God concerns himself with every detail of our lives.

APPLICATION: God cares about everything we face. He cares about our relationships. There is nothing about which we need to reserve an attitude of worry. It is difficult to maintain an attitude of hostility toward someone if we are at peace. We realize that life is too short. Others may malign us. They may gossip about us. It makes no difference what they do because we are at peace within ourselves. We have put the whole situation in the Lord's hands. They are upset; we are relaxed.

Paul uses three different words for prayer in this verse. First, the ordinary word for prayer -- "by prayer." The second word for prayer is "supplication" which connotes the idea of asking for things. Finally, "requests" refer to particular requests.

The word translated "prayer" means to present our desires to the Lord. It has to do with telling God what we would like him to do for us. It means to go to God with a conscious dependence upon him. We trust him to fulfill our need. We are not asking him to do something he has asked us to do. We are praying about things only he can uniquely do for us.

The word "prayer" is in the instrumental case. It is by means of prayer that we stop worrying. We do that by presenting our worries to God and leave them with him. Prayer is the means of putting our situation in the Lord's hands.

Most people will not admit this. Deep in their heart they want a sudden miracle that will remove the pain immediately. This is the very thing we usually will not receive in answer to prayer. When we put the situation in the Lord's hand the pressure is still there but the worry is not. God does not always solve our problems by removing the problem. Sometimes he resolves the problem by changing us.

PRINCIPLE: Prayer is the means to alleviate worry.

APPLICATION: At the point we put the problem in the Lord's hands we remove ourselves from the loop of anxiety. We no longer worry about it. At times the Lord will remove the problem immediately. Other times he may chose to let us ride with it until we come to the place of strong faith. He wants to put us to the test of utilizing his provisions. He has given certain divine operating assets. The more we are aware of those assets and appropriate them, the more we trust God. The problem remains but we have given it to the Lord. If we do this we will have peace (v.7).

And supplication

A supplication is a specific request for a particular need. It is a special entreaty for a special situation. This is prayer for a special need. People are praying for revival in North America. This is a supplication.

Supplication moves us in our prayer from the general to the specific. Prayer that God will "bless me and my loved ones" is not specific prayer. We take a specific need to God and charge him with the responsibility of meeting it.

Prayers are ordinary requests. Supplications are unique, special requests. Ordinary prayers are presented without a great deal of emotional steam. No one is sick or about to die. Supplication is another matter. Supplication is earnest entreaty about a special need. We are not sure whether God is going to bring our husband through surgery.

Prayer and supplication are listed together in a number of passages: "Praying always with all prayer and supplication in the Spirit, being watchful to this end with all perseverance and supplication for all the saints--" (Eph. 6:18). "Therefore I exhort first of all that supplications, prayers, intercessions, and giving of thanks be made for all men" (I Tim. 2:1-3). "Who in the days of his flesh, when He had offered up prayers and supplications, with vehement cries and tears to Him was able to save Him from death, and was heard because of His godly fear" (Heb. 5:7).

PRINCIPLE: Supplication is a special privilege of prayer to meet special needs.

APPLICATION: Do you set aside certain times for supplication in your prayer life?

With thanksgiving

Accompany prayer "with thanksgiving." We thank God for the privilege of prayer and for answered prayer. Thanksgiving verifies capacity of soul to appreciate God.

Thanking God in advance of the answer is an act of faith. Thanksgiving looks back to previous answers to prayer and gives thanks, "Last week I went to God with that same gnawing anxiety and he met me in my need." Confidence for the future is based on confidence in the past. Do not forget to stir in a generous amount of thanksgiving before you get the answer.

"Thanksgiving" is an indication of capacity to appreciate God. If we do not appreciate God we will not even pray properly much less give thanks. Thanksgiving implies gratitude. Gratitude implies submission to God. When we become convinced that God works all things together for good, we are grateful to a sovereign God. Thanksgiving indicates a heart that is at rest. We come to rest in the will of God and submit to whatever he chooses to do. Whatever the outcome we rest in God's sovereign hand. Thanksgiving means that we have peace about how God is going to answer.

Thanksgiving is one of the five categories of prayer. The other four categories are confession, praise, petition and intercession. If we omit thanksgiving in prayer, our prayer is out of balance. How many people have you heard pray, "Oh God, help me" and not thank God for a thing? They were not thankful at all. Their only focus was to get out of the jam. The heat was on and they were trying to squirm out. God was irrelevant to them. He was a genie who will help them out of their fix.

PRINCIPLE: Thanksgiving indicates a capacity of soul that appreciates God and his work.

APPLICATION: Why give thanks? This is the response of faith to a faithful God. Thanksgiving is more than thankfulness for material things. Unbelievers give thanks for material blessing. Christians should thank God for the grace of God, the provisions God has made in Christ. We should thank him for our positional truth, for the wonder of his attributes. The extent of some people's ca-

capacity for thanks is to thank God that the pressure is removed. Once the pressure goes they move on and forget that God exists.

Let your requests be made known to God

We are to present our requests to God as if he did not know all about it. A mother loves to listen to her crying child tell her about the problem. She shows sympathy and understanding. She wants to hear about both the hurts and the triumphs. A little child can be quite sure that whatever happens to them, it is of interest to their mother. We can take all of our cares both past and future to God, with all of our shame and our needs, with all our fears into the presence of God.

Get your requisition in and leave it there. We will not worry about when God answers or how he will answer or if he will ever answer. Once the requisition is in, we have done all that God requires of us. We dare not dictate to God how he must answer. Prayer is not twisting the arm of a reluctant God.

God meets us in his own sovereign way. There are times when he meets us at the point of our desires. At other times he chooses not to answer our prayer with a "yes."

After the trial passes away we say, "Why did I worry about that? God worked it out according to his will. The next time I get into a hassle like that I will not worry. I have learned my lesson." Often we do not learn that lesson.

The proof of unbelief is worry. We feel we must help God work out the problem. Worry will help him solve my difficulty. So we eat our heart out with worry. Prayer is just the opposite. It places problems confidently in the hands of God.

If we pray it must be a prayer that the Savior can initial. We all are careful about the things we endorse. We do not put our signature on everything. Likewise the Lord Jesus does not endorse every prayer. If he did he would be capricious. He could not do that; it would imperil his name, "And whatever you ask in My name, that I will do, that the Father may be glorified in the Son, if you ask anything in My name, I will do it" (John 14:13,14).

The words "to God" mean "in the presence of God." Prayer made with a conscious idea of the

presence of God is true prayer. Many of our prayers are mechanical. We say words but do not personally talk to God.

PRINCIPLE: God wants to know about our requests. Our responsibility is to make them known to him.

APPLICATION: This call to prayer is not a call to inaction. The believer is to take responsibility for the things for which God has given him capacity. Apathy is no attribute of Christianity.

Philippians 4:7

And the peace of God, which surpasses all understanding, will guard your hearts and minds through Christ Jesus.

Prayer and peace go hand in hand. This is the blessed result of leaving everything in the hands of God by prayer.

And the peace of God

"Peace" is harmony after the removal of all disturbing elements. The disturbing element in this context is the disagreement of Euodia and Syntyche. If a person enjoys rest and contentment, there is less likelihood that they will enter into conflict with others. If our harmony with God is foremost our harmony will people will follow.

"Of God" means that God is the source of this peace. It is the peace of God because he is the source of it. John 14:27. This is not the imputed peace of justification but the imparted peace of sanctification. This is not the peace with God but the peace of God. Peace with God is the result of casting our cares on him.

God gives unruffled calm within, an inner tranquillity. Prayer puts us at rest. This eliminates religious St. Vitas' Dance of the soul. We are able to sit down on the inside. We sit at ease in our soul. We no longer strain, pull and tug. When we leave something in the hands of God, we walk away from the situation in perfect peace.

Which surpasses all understanding

The word "surpass" means to have above, over top, exceed or rise above. This transcends the faculty of the mind. It is not a mind distracted by hurts. It is a disciplined and discerning mind. The peace of God eclipses the mind as a preventative

for worry. The mind is the seat of anxiety. Lack of peace of mind drives many to psychologists and psychiatrists. The peace of God surpasses every human device as a means of securing tranquillity of heart.

The phrase "passes all understanding" reminds me of Eph 3:19,20, "To know the love of Christ which passes knowledge; that you may be filled with all the fullness of God. Now to Him who is able to do exceedingly abundantly above all that we ask or think, according to the power that works in us." The love of Christ is so far beyond our capacity to take in that we cannot fathom it all. It is the same with the peace of God. The peace of God surpasses all understanding. It not only passes all understanding it also passes all misunderstanding as well. The peace of God is divine. That is why it defies all understanding. It is inexplicable and inscrutable.

"Understanding" is the seat of reflective consciousness. It comprises the faculties of knowing, perceiving, judging and determining. This peace will surpass all thinking power. It is humanly inexplicable. This peace surpasses human understanding. Psychology cannot explain this.

PRINCIPLE: Inner friction of soul often results in outer conflict with people. Keeping peace in our heart will keep peace in the church.

APPLICATION: The peace of God is a promise to the believer, not a prayer. What is eating at you today? It is not what you eat that kills you; it is what is eating at you. There is a direct correlation between our antagonism and our failure to pray by faith.

Our enemies are not people, "For we do not wrestle against flesh and blood, but against principalities, against power, against the rulers of the darkness of this age, against spiritual hosts of wickedness in the heavenly places" (Eph 6:12). We can dismiss people as the ultimate problem right off. We fight a spiritual war. Only by placing the battle in God's hands by faith can we have inner peace.

Will guard your hearts and minds

The word "guard" is a military term. It means a mounted guard. This image was familiar to Philippians because the city was a military outpost of the Roman government. This word is used in II

Cor. 11:32 of a garrison guarding a city, "In Damascus the governor, under Aretas the king, was guarding the city of the Damascenes with a garrison, desiring to arrest me (Paul)." In I Pet. 1:5 this term in Philippians is used of God, "Who are kept by the power of God through faith for salvation ready to be revealed in the last time." God guards our salvation until we go to meet him in eternity.

The peace of God stands guard over our soul. God protects our hearts and minds from inner disturbance when we present anxieties to him in prayer. The sentinel of God's peace will stand mount guard over our hearts and thoughts.

The future tense here is the future of assured results. God's peace patrols before the heart's door like a sentinel defending it from assaults of temptation, anxiety, and bitter resentment. If we have the peace of God in our hearts and minds, we will not be full of anxious resentment. We will not enter into conflict with an Euodia or a Syntyche of our lives. We cannot live in conflict with others and possess the peace of God simultaneously. The peace of God and personality conflict cannot coexist.

The word "heart" is used in the Bible for the main-spring of moral and spiritual desire that determines the entire character. The peace of God will guard the whole person.

There are times we are anxious in our hearts and then there are times when we are anxious in our minds. The word "mind" is the product or result of thinking. If we focus our mind on the Lord, he will keep us in peace,

Isa. 26:3, "You will keep him in perfect peace, Whose mind is stayed on You, Because he trusts in You." (Isa 26:3).

Through Christ Jesus

The word "through" should not translate as means but sphere--"in." Union with Christ is our sphere for peace. The more we appreciate our union with Christ the more we understand that God guards our hearts and minds.

PRINCIPLE: We cannot have the peace of God and antagonism toward someone else at the same time.

APPLICATION: God will guard our hearts against antagonism toward others if present our problems to him in prayer.

Philippians 4:8

Finally, brethren, whatever things are true, whatever things are noble, whatever things are just, whatever things are pure, whatever things are lovely, whatever things are of good report, if there is any virtue and if there is anything praiseworthy - meditate on these things.

In this verse we find a catalogue of thinking for developing a proper mental attitude. This is the fourth and last principle for the correction of personality conflict. The first principle focuses the mind on the Lord rather than people (v.4). The second principle--pliability and flexibility in non principle areas are crucial to incorporate different viewpoints into one group (v5). The third principle presents the problem to God in prayer so the anxiety of uncertainty does not negatively invade relationships (vv6,7).

"Finally" points to the last principle for the resolution of discord. By displacing unworthy thoughts with God thinking, a person disengages from strife. As we think on worthy objects, our attitude changes into God honoring orientation.

Six "whatevers" follow. All are in the plural. That indicates several categories reside under each "whatever." These six things and anything else within their categories are things about which God endorses us to think.

The principle of displacement means that we fight fire with fire. It is not enough to cast out wrong thinking from our minds. If we simply reject a thought by sheer will it will come back when we stop exercising our will. The mind cannot stand a vacuum. It will always draw something into it, good or evil. If we do not structure God's thoughts into our thinking, thoughts counter to God will direct our thinking. If we displace the world's thoughts with God's thoughts, we take on a new orientation. That new orientation is an attitude. We form God's frame of reference or bearing about things.

This passage says we are to think about that which is true, noble, just, pure, lovely, good report, virtue and praiseworthy.

PRINCIPLE: The principle of displacement means that we replace our thinking with God's thinking and are thereby controlled by God's viewpoint.

APPLICATION: What volume of thought do you give to God's viewpoint on life? Is your mind controlled with God's thinking and values?

- "How can a young man cleanse his way?
- By taking heed according to Your word...
- Your word I have hidden in my heart,
- that I might not sin against You" (Ps. 119:9,11).

"As a man thinks in his heart, so is he." If the Christian is to control the thought life, he must place God's thought structure into his mind. Paul lists nine areas around which the Christian should focus his thinking. Euodia and Syntyche thoughts shred each other with hatred and bitterness. They held those thoughts so long that resentment became a part of their thinking. Resentment became an attitude.

The way to counter negative attitudes is with positive biblical attitudes. Their focus was not God centered. Paul is asking them to refocus their thoughts to the way God thinks. The first area of restructuring their thought life is the category of that which is "true."

Whatever things are true

This is not simply something that is true as over against that which is fictitious or false. "True" here is truth in the widest sense, true in the sense of valid, reliable or honest. It includes motives and conduct. "True" involves anything that is reliable or consistent with God's character.

God wants us to think about his Word so that we can change our lives. The more we apply God's truth to our experience the more we grow. It allows to think about life from God's viewpoint.

When a thought comes into our minds we should subject it to the test of whether it is true. Is it worthy of consideration? Does it ring true? Do the things to which we give attention ring true to God's Word or do they twist God's view of things?

PRINCIPLE: Truth is a building block of a good relationship. Truth builds trust between people.

APPLICATION: Are you fair in the way you deal with people in your life? Instead of honestly facing what they may say to you, do you justify your position at all costs? Do you manipulate the truth to make yourself look better? Are you secure enough to face your flaws? Are you truthful with yourself? Have you rationalized your position so much that those close to you no longer attempt to deal with the issue any more?

Paul is challenging Euodia and Syntyche to think in an entirely different way. They suffered defeat by bitterness towards each other. If they are to conquer these thoughts they must replace them with the way God thinks.

Whatever things are noble

"Noble" is that which is worthy of worship or reverence. "Noble" signifies that which claims respect. Some things are base, mean, frivolous or flippant. These things do not carry respect. We respect things for their morale or spiritual quality. This word is used in I Tim. 3:8, 11 and Titus 2:2 of church officers. This quality makes them worthy of respect. Venerate each other.

Euodia needs to respect Syntyche. Syntyche needs to find what she can respect about Euodia. Instead of tearing each other down we should find areas where we can honor each other. Esteem is a building block of a good relationship.

PRINCIPLE: Mutual respect is a building block of a good relationship.

APPLICATION: Do you seek to find what you can respect in another person? Is your orientation to find fault in other people? Do you try to discover the commendable side of other people?

Whatever things are just

"Just" is that which is right or fair. "Just" refers to conformity to God's standards. Thus it is worthy of God's approval. Anything that is fair and square in relation to God or man forms a proper attitude. The Christian should think about whatever is on the level. Certain types prejudice against people of color or level of income. Bias blinds their sense of fairness.

PRINCIPLE: Fairness is a reflection of God's character. A sense of fairness is a building block for a good relationship.

APPLICATION: Are you unfair with people close to you? Do you use unfair tactics with them that make them feel manipulated by you? Have you considered the possibility of relating to people fairly regardless of the consequence? You will have done your half of building an environment for a good relationship.

The issue of fairness is tricky business. A friend may do something wrong and deeply grieve over the wrong. We may not see that grief. We may severely blame them for something they have already deeply exercised their own hearts. They may have already confessed it and put the necessary corrections in place. This is to engage in unnecessary work. It is blindness to fairness.

Whatever things are pure

"Pure" refers to that which is undefiled because it resists or is untouched by evil. This is not freedom from sins of the flesh alone but from all avenues of the heart and life that violate God's will. Both motive and deed need to be undefiled if we are to build a proper attitude.

PRINCIPLE: The principle of purity is the principle of simplicity in dealing with other people. We cannot mix both the pleasure of hurting someone and living in the will of God. If we live in the will of God we must be pure in our dealings with others.

APPLICATION: Have you contaminated your relationships by a mixture of your motives? Do you want both your cake and eat it too? Do you want to hurt God's people and yet walk with God? God does not want us to mix our drinks!

Whatever things are lovely

The word "lovely" comes from two Greek words: "towards" and "affection." "Lovely" is anything that inclines the affection toward towards others. This quality endears and attracts others to ourselves by its grace.

Lovely speaks of what promotes accord rather than conflict. This person is free from hatred, bitterness, jealousy, envy. On the other hand, this person is amiable and agreeable.

Do you seek concord with others? Some minds are so set on vengeance they bring out bitterness and anger in others. Syntyche was so fixed on criticizing and rebuking Euodia she destroyed her oppor-

tunity to win Euodia. The target of her attack resents her. Syntyche was not winsome or attractive in her approach. That is no way to correct conflict; it only alienates and distances people from each other.

PRINCIPLE: It is important to work on our attractiveness to others. We are not very attractive when we approach people with the soul kinks of bitterness. We win others with a disposition of agreeableness.

APPLICATION: How amiable are you? Are you a disagreeable person? Are you hard to get along with? Do you drive a hard bargain?

Whatever things are of good report

"Good report" is sweet speaking or fair speaking. This person speaks well for himself. He is reputable, winning, attractive and leads others to exclaim "well done." He is commendable. This believer is positive and constructive rather than negative and destructive. Do not dwell on the negative and bad report. Dwelling on discouraging things distorts our view of the world. Ugly and untrue words destroy the possibility of reconciliation.

If Euodia thinks on the virtues of Syntyche, her sister in Christ will develop a greater likelihood of reciprocity. If Euodia magnifies her graces and minimizes her faults, Syntyche will sense appreciation. She has the greatest context to link to Euodia as a friend.

If, on the other hand, Euodia is a gossip monger, who tells every horrible story she can find about Syntyche, there is little hope for reconciliation. Some people love to relate the failures of other people because it makes them look good by contrast.

PRINCIPLE: God wants us to tell good, kind and true stories about others. This builds an environment for reconciliation.

APPLICATION: Instead of dwelling on the failures of our friends we focus on their positive contributions we have a much greater potential for reconciliation. When there comes an occasion to correct a friend we will have built an environment of credibility that will allow us to critique them.

Paul describes the last two areas by an "if" clause. Both of these clauses appeal to something that is true in the Christian. This is not something potential in the believer.

If there is any virtue

The "if" in this clause is not an "if" of doubt but of fact in the Greek. The "if" assumes actual fact: "Since there is any virtue."

"Virtue" is moral excellence. "Virtue" is first used in the sense of superiority in every respect. Then the New Testament uses it in a moral sense of that which gives a person their moral worth. It is their good qualities. It is excellence in any sphere of life and the prestige which such excellence attracts.

Excellence is that which best becomes a person who operates under the grace of God. We are not to allow the unworthy to clutter our minds. The unworthy may not be vulgar but it may be tawdry. The tawdry is not worth giving mental space. If we store our minds with the right things distortions will find no room.

"Virtue" is found only two other times in the New Testament: "But you are a chosen generation, a royal priesthood, a holy nation, His own special people, that you may proclaim the praises of Him who called you out of darkness into His marvelous light" (I Pet 2:9). The word "praises" in "the praises of Him" is the word "virtue." We praise God by pointing out his excellence. He is superior in every respect. The point of this verse is the believer has status before God because God "chose" him, made him a "royal priesthood," "a holy nation," "His own special people." Each Christian has this status and needs recognition by every believer for that fact. God is to be praised for his virtue, excellence in making each believer this way.

The last time the word "excellence" or "virtue" is used in the New Testament is in II Peter 1:3, "As His divine power has given to us all things that pertain to life and godliness, through the knowledge of Him who called us by glory and virtue." Again, this is God's virtue. God calls us by his virtue. He calls us by virtue of his excellence. Every Christian possesses nobility, excellence and virtue because of his call.

PRINCIPLE: It is a fact that every believer holds a status before God. Every believer should recog-

nize that status no matter how carnal the other person may be.

APPLICATION: Our anger may blind us to the reality that we attack a child of God. That Christian holds status before God. Do you respect the status of every born again believer? To disrespect that status is to disrespect God who called that person.

And if there is anything praiseworthy

The word "praiseworthy" is preceded by an "if." The "if" is an if of assumed fact: "Since there is actually something praiseworthy" in the other person. Every true child of God has something praiseworthy in them no matter how distorted they may be. This is the second assumed fact about which the believer is to think. We are to think about what is praiseworthy in other Christians.

"Praiseworthy" is anything capable of praise as a result of the practice of moral excellence. There are things that humans universally approve. It is whatever generally deemed praiseworthy by all human beings.

There are things in both Euodia and Syntyche worthy of praise no matter how far they have deteriorated into carnality. Paul says in effect "If you cannot approve of each other's growth or spirituality, at least you can approve of each other as human beings!" This is an approval of the civic worth in the other persons. Paul is saying, "At bare minimum, be civil with each other!"

PRINCIPLE: God expects us to find at least a modicum of praise in other Christians.

APPLICATION: It is easy to find fault with others. One of the easiest things to find is fault. The person who is always finding fault seldom finds anything else. It is a lot easier to blow out another person's light than to light your own. It is more difficult to find something to praise in other people.

Take a good look at your worst enemy. Is there anything "praiseworthy" in them? At minimum, be civil with them!

--Meditate on these things

The nine objects of thought in verse eight form the attitude. If we yield to constant negative thinking

our attitude will form a direction different from God's will. If we "meditate" on these nine areas they will displace negative thinking.

The word "mediate" means to reckon, rightly estimate and take account in a practical way. The idea is to give structure to the thought life. "Give continuous attention to the things listed above. Occupy your mind with the above catalogue. Focus your attention on the charter of thought God sanctions." God wants us to account for our thought life.

The greatest area of sin in our lives is not in overt sin but the thought life. "Meditation" controls the thought life,

"Blessed is the man

Who walks not in the counsel of the ungodly,

Nor stands in the path of sinners,

Nor sits in the seat of the scornful;

But his delight is in the law of the LORD,

And in His law he meditates day and night" (Ps 1:1,2).

The word "meditate in this Psalm means to chew the cud. The idea is to ruminate about the Word of God. David likens himself to a ruminating cow. He takes a Scripture and ruminates over and over it until he can appropriate the Word to his life.

II Corinthians 10:5 is a verse I have used more than any other to deal with wrong thoughts, "Casting down arguments and every high thing that exalts itself against the knowledge of God, bringing into captivity every thought to the obedience of Christ." Meditate on our wonderful Lord. Do not give your mind to cruel, ugly and hateful things. If all we read is the newspaper which is filled with murder, rape, riot, graft, robbery, accidents, we will structure our mind around God. If that is all we read, we fill our minds with misery.

We need to ride herd on our head. We dare not think anything we please. We dare not put our minds in neutral and let the world push it around. Evil thoughts waste our spiritual energies but so do wool-gathering and daydreaming. We might dream about winning the lottery. We may dream that we will marry a tall, dark and handsome man with money and mussels. We will probably marry a short, skinny man with warts who will

grow up to be fat, bald with ulcers!! Lasso every thought unto the obedience of Christ. The more we store the Word of God in our hearts the less room there is for the useless and vulgar.

If we put a drop of arsenic into a glass of water, the water will not dilute the arsenic. The arsenic poisons the water. Resentment poisons the spiritual life. The Word of God will displace the bitterness.

PRINCIPLE: God wants us to sit in judgment on every thought that comes into our mind. If it does not pass the test of verse eight, we should reject it.

APPLICATION: Do you have trouble with your thoughts? There are six legitimate categories about which the child of God can think. The mind will always fix itself on something. The real issue is what we will set on mind upon. If we think negatively about someone long enough, we will reach the point where we develop a sinful attitude. An attitude is harder to control than a single thought. God wants us to develop godly attitudes by habitual meditation upon God's Word.

Philippians 4:9

The things which you learned and received and heard and saw in me, these do, and the God of peace will be with you.

The Philippians learned much from the apostle Paul. They authenticated the Christian life from both from his lips and his life.

The words "learned" and "heard" form a pair. Both terms relate to what Paul taught the Philippians. The words "received" and "saw" form a pair. Both of these terms link to application of truth.

There are two principle plus application statements in this verse. First we learn (principle) then we receive (application). Next we hear (principle) then we see (application).

PRINCIPLE: Both principle and application form proper balance in the execution of the Christian life.

APPLICATION: Are you one of those people who say "I don't need all that doctrine. All I need is the practical. Just show me how and I will get on with my Christian life." The problem with that is we cannot "get on" with our Christian life if we do not learn God's way of thinking. The Christian life is a

system of values that emerge from God's Word. Is there no place for truth in your life? Are you willing to dedicate yourself to discover God's mind? This comes only by a serious study of Scripture.

Other people have the impression that if they mount up enough information they will please God. Information minus application distorts the Christian life. This kind of Christian living ends in sterility. People who ever learn but never practice eventually instill disillusion into their souls. They eventually come to believe that the Bible does not work. If you are in this category, are you willing to learn a principle every day and apply it every day? Are you ready to translate truth into experience?

Whenever we see a "grocery list" of verbs like this there is a temptation to slide over them as so much verbiage. However, God does not waste words when he writes Scripture.

"Learned" and "received" form a pair. This is instruction in doctrine and practice.

The words "heard" and "saw" also form a pair. These are the things they learned by observing his example.

The things which you learned and received

The Philippians received a body of truth from the apostle while he was in Philippi. That truth was received in two ways. First, it was "learned."

"Learned" is Paul's personal instruction. The word "learned" means to receive from a person. This is instruction of formal content. This word implies that a person with authority is the teacher. The authority is in what they know.

These are the things that the Philippians learned from the lips of Paul. Teaching is foundational to Christian living. We cannot experience the Christian life properly without structure or belief. We cannot apply what we do not know.

In this word Paul gathers up everything he taught them while in Philippi. God expects us to sit under the formal teaching of God's Word. It is not enough to study the Bible for ourselves.

If everything we learn from our pastor goes in one ear and out the other, we cannot practice God's Word. At the point we need to apply it, it is not in

our mind. How can we apply what we do not know? If we try to experience Christianity without the structure of God's Word in our minds we will blow with every wind of doctrine. Instability, insecurity, fear, doubt will result. The mind must expose itself to the exposition of the Word of God.

PRINCIPLE: Christian living begins with knowledge of the principles of God's Word.

APPLICATION: We cannot form principles of God's Word without knowledge of the Bible. God's design for forming these principles is by the pastor-teacher formally teaching God's Word in the local assembly. Will you commit to learning the Word of God in church? The pastor has the time and giftedness to study the Bible. Most lay people do not have time to study the Bible the way the pastor can. Accepting the pastor's authority does not infer he can make no mistake. It does assume that he is a serious Bible student. Do you come to church with the attitude of accepting the authority of the pastor-teacher?

The word "learned" and "received" are a pair. "Learned" refers to the principles of the Christian life we form from sitting under the teaching of God's Word. "Received" is the response to sitting under God's Word.

And received

"Received" takes up the reception of instruction. The word means to receive by being beside someone. The Philippians received instruction as a matter of personal experience. They listened to Paul's teaching because they "received" from Paul's person. When we appropriate truth we learn it builds an edification complex in our soul. We become stronger as we appropriate what we know.

The word "received" also means to give assent. The word contains the idea of receive with a welcoming attitude. The Philippians recognize Paul's teaching as the truth of God. They acknowledge that it is the Word of God. They respond with positive volition. They understand their responsibility to the truth. "As newborn babes, desire the pure milk of the word, that you may grow thereby" (I Pet. 2:2).

PRINCIPLE: Application of truth to experience is an important link in building an edification complex in the soul.

APPLICATION: As we sit under a pastor and learn the truth, we assume responsibility for the truth. If we receive the truth and do not accept responsibility for what we know, we violate an essential principle of Christianity -- the principle of application. Biblical truth is never static; it is always dynamic. If we neglect God's truth we disrespect its dynamic.

In context Euodia and Syntyche knew the truth (4:2,3) of unity among Christians but they did not apply it. By neglecting the appropriation of truth they cast aspersions on both God and his Word.

Now we come to the second pair of verbs: "heard" and "saw." The first pair "learned" and "received" dealt with teaching. "Heard" and "saw" deal with another category.

And heard

"Hear" and "saw" have to do with example. Paul is an example both in word ("heard") and conduct ("saw"). The Philippians saw a concrete example in Paul of his teaching.

They heard Paul teach the Word of God personally. This term does not refer to a formal learning process. In this case they learn from Paul's person rather than his role as a teacher. Relationship is crucial for the learning process in Christianity.

And saw in me

The Philippians saw Paul translate what he taught into action with their own eyes. His life matched his lips. They "got the point" of what Christianity was all about when they watched his life. The eyes of their soul saw the life of Paul. The soul has perception.

The words "in me" mean the four categories of their exposure to the apostle. Paul's life was an open book. Everything they experienced from him, whether by teaching or by example, they are to implement into their lives.

"Receive" and "saw" concern the outcome of exposure to truth. It is one thing to sit under formal teaching but it is another thing to receive or appropriate that teaching into one's life. It is one thing to observe an example but it is another thing to adopt the example into our lives. If we listen to the content of truth but do not apply it to what we currently face in our lives, receiving does not occur. If we observe an example of dynamic spiritual

living, but do not "get the point," we waste the example. We can learn or hear formally but not translate what we know into experience.

PRINCIPLE: Example is a powerful mode of teaching. The soul can see in example what it cannot see in formal teaching.

APPLICATION: Are you the type of person who exclusively believes in formal teaching as the mode of reaching people? Do you care how you impact people by how you say things? Euodia and Syntyche did not care (4:2,3). As Christian leaders they set a very powerful negative example. We should present ourselves to others in the context of a positive relationship.

These do

"These" is anything you heard from the apostle whether in formal or informal teaching. We have to understand truth before we can practice it. Many people try to experience Christianity without either knowing the principles of the Christian life or how to apply truth to experience.

The word "do" means to practice. The idea is to habitually carry out an action. Practice as a habit. Verse 8 gave instruction as to our thought life; v9 gives instruction as to conduct. It is not enough to know. We must do (I John 1:6; James 1:22). Truth must first go to the mind then the heart and will and finally into action. God directs truth to the total person. It is not simply designed to aim at the mind; it is designed to appropriate into experience. Truth that does not grip the total person does not fulfill its purpose.

James says that these people hear but do not "do" the word. He says that these people are like a person who stands before a mirror that reveals that the face is dirty. Instead of washing his face he walks away. The disclosure of the mirror should have caused him to act. A man who listens to the Word of God and does nothing about it is like the man who sees his dirty face in a mirror and walks away. James goes on to make the point that a person who mechanically listens to the Word without doing anything about it, will never enter God's blessing. God rejects him because he is unclean. His spiritual face is dirty. He has no excuse because the mirror disclosed his condition. Blessing comes as we appropriate truth to experience.

The tense means to "keep on practicing habitually." Paul's presentation of Christianity is not pretty mottoes or catch slogans. He wanted aspirations to become actualities and professions to become performances.

Sequence:

1. Listen to the formal teaching of God's Word
2. Apply the principles of God's Word to experience (edification complex)
3. Listen to the teaching of God's Word in informal situations.
4. Get the point of "rubbing elbows" with mature believers.
5. Practice the above four points.

The sequence is important. If we do not know the content of God's Word, we cannot practice it. If we do not apply the principles of God's Word to experience, we cannot practice it. If we do not take opportunities to expose ourselves to informal teaching of God's Word, such as a Bible study, we cannot practice God's Word. If we do not experience personal relationships with mature Christians, we cannot practice it.

If we ever get into a pressure situation, the resources for relating Christianity to our emergency will not be there. If we face a temptation and we do not have the Word of God stored in our mind, we will fall. If we have the Word of God in our mind but apply it infrequently, there is a greater likelihood of falling. A picture of this is a student who tries to bluff his way through an exam without preparation. The Christian who tries to bluff his way through the Christian life will become disillusioned.

PRINCIPLE: What we believe determines what we think; what we think determines who we are; who we are determines what we do.

APPLICATION: Do you fail in the practice of your Christianity because do you not begin at the right place?

If people practice truth, assured peace is the result. If we experience the five points of the sequence of verse 9, then we will experience God's personal peace. This is another way for Euodia and Syntyche to resolve their personality conflict.

And the God of peace

Paul said in verse 6 we will have the peace of God if we present our anxieties to God in prayer. Now he says we have the God of peace with us if we follow the fivefold sequence of verse 9.

God is the God of peace because he is the source of peace. God imparts peace both to the individual life of the believer and to groups.

"Now may the God of peace Himself sanctify you completely; and may your whole spirit, soul, and body be preserved blameless at the coming of our Lord Jesus Christ." (I Thes.5:23). The God of peace will set us apart unto God and preserve us until Christ comes again.

"And the God of peace will crush Satan under your feet shortly" (Rom. 16:20). The believer will possess God's peace under Satanic attack.

"Now may the God of peace who brought up our Lord Jesus from the dead, that great Shepherd of the sheep, through the blood of the everlasting covenant, make you complete in every good work to do His will, working in you what is well pleasing in His sight, through Jesus Christ, to whom be glory forever and ever. Amen." (Heb 13:20). The God of peace who raised Jesus from the dead has the power to enable us to do his will.

The Hebrew word for peace, "shalom," means whole. Peace is more than the absence of trouble to the Jew. It is more than a negative thing. Peace is the whole person at rest. It is anything that that makes for the good of the individual.

In this context it is peace in the sense of harmony. Euodia and Syntyche were at odds. Their relationship needed to develop into a harmonious whole. It is only from the source of God that we are able to enter into a whole relationship with fellow believers.

"Peace" means harmony. Harmony in the Philippian church is the result of focus upon God's Word and its application to our lives. If we live by God's priorities, both internal and external harmony will result.

PRINCIPLE: The believer will have harmony both within himself and without with other believers if he focuses his life on the application of God's Word to his life.

APPLICATION: Unity comes out of the peace of God. God will give peace you and establish your relationships. God will manifest his presence by giving you peace with others.

Will be with you

The presence of the God of peace will be with us. God's guarantees the presence of his very peace to those who appropriate God's truth. God is there all of the time. God will make us aware that he is there. As David knew God's presence was with him when he went forth to slay the giant, we can know God is with us as we go into each day of our lives.

God's peace will be our companion. The word "with" is a very strong term. It conveys the idea of "together with." Our relationship with God is at its best when we practice the fivefold sequence listed above. God is tapping his foot waiting for us to respond.

It must have been great encouragement to Joshua to receive God's promise of his presence when he took the mantle of Moses, "As I was with Moses, so I will be with you. I will not leave you nor forsake you" (Joshua 1:5). "For the LORD your God is with you wherever you go" (Joshua 1:9). God gave him the assurance that no matter where he found himself God's presence was with him. This is God's providential care of believers.

PRINCIPLE: Enjoyment of God's peace depends on the application of truth to experience.

APPLICATION: God's blessing comes through the fivefold sequence. The target of the fivefold sequence is a sense of God's presence in our lives.

Philippians 4:10

But I rejoiced in the Lord greatly that now at last your care for me has flourished again; though you surely did care, but you lacked opportunity.

This verse introduces a new paragraph running from verse 10 to verse 20. The paragraph deals with Paul's thanks for the Philippians gift of money while he is in jail. The Roman jail did not provide money, clothes or blankets. Paul was in a desperate situation.

Epaphroditus carried a money gift from Philippi to Rome (about 1,100 miles) where Paul was in jail (4:18). Now Paul expresses his gratitude for the

generous gift from the Philippians. This is a "thank you" note from a missionary to a supporting church.

But I rejoiced in the Lord greatly

Paul rejoiced in this monetary gift but he recognized that the gift ultimately came from God. This is the last strike of the keynote word "joy" in the epistle. He adds "greatly." His joy in the Lord was great.

His joy, as ever, was "in the Lord." This is the ninth time the phrase "in the Lord" occurs in this epistle (1:14; 2:19,24,29; 3:1; 4:1,2,4). He saw that it was their love for the Lord that motivated them to give. They sent the gift but he thanked God as the ultimate source of the gift.

That now at last

"At last" is not a rebuke for their neglect of supporting him. He merely indicates a period of time elapsed since his last thank you note for their support. It was probably over two years since they gave to his ministry. Epaphroditus' willingness to deliver the gift, occasioned the opportunity for them to give.

PRINCIPLE: Every thing we possess is ultimately from God.

APPLICATION: The way to free ourselves from enslavement to materialism is by recognition that everything is from the hand of God. God provides our employment. If God is the focus of our joy, inner animation of our soul will be constant. If we rest our joy on circumstance, our joy is vulnerable to circumstance.

Paul now describes his attitude toward the Philippian gift toward his ministry.

Your care for me has flourished again

Paul alluded to the gift brought by Epaphroditus earlier in Philippians (1:5,7; 2:30). Now he formally thanks them for their generosity.

Whenever the Philippians saw that Paul needed financial support they came through like a verdant garden lush with flowering blossoms. Paul received their gift like a wife who gets a bouquet of flowers from her husband. The word "flourished" means revive, sprout, blossom. Their ap-

preciation for the gospel motivated them to give sacrificially. They knew Paul's sacrifice in bringing the gospel to them. They gladly, frequently and generously contributed to the ministry of the apostle. Whenever possible, they blossomed in their financial support of Paul.

The local church has a definite responsibility for the support of missionaries. Some churches leave their missionaries without support on foreign fields because of a split. What a tragedy!

Though you surely did care

The Philippians continually supported Paul, "Moreover, brethren, we make known to you the grace of God [grace is the motivation for giving] bestowed on the churches of Macedonia [Philippi was in Macedonia]: that in a great trial of affliction the abundance of their joy and their deep poverty abounded in the riches of their liberality [out of abject poverty they give abundantly to the cause of Christ]. For I bear witness that according to their ability, yes, and beyond their ability, they were freely willing [no pressure was put upon them to give], imploring us with much urgency [they were passionate about their giving] that we would receive the gift and the fellowship of the ministering to the saints" (II Cor. 8:1-4).

But you lacked opportunity

They could not find Paul to gift him with an offering. He did not want to leave the impression that they forgot him. They did not know where he was or could find a way to deliver the money to him. The Philippian church always supported Paul so long as they knew where he was. They considered him their agent for the cause of Christ throughout the world.

PRINCIPLE: Behind great missionary projects is a frame of mind.

APPLICATION: Thought precedes action. All spiritual action is based on an attitude. The attitude of love is the basis of the dissemination of the gospel. It is a concern for people in other parts of the world. God wants us to love the agents who bring the gospel ("how beautiful are the feet of them who preach the gospel"). God wants us to have a personal interest in missionaries of our local church sent to uttermost part of the world.

Do you seek opportunities to support agents of the gospel? Do you reluctantly give to the cause of Christ? Do you have an attitude of supporting missionaries whenever you can?

Philippians 4:11

Not that I speak in regard to need, for I have learned in whatever state I am, to be content.

Having expressed his appreciation for the Philippians' financial support, Paul now introduces a caveat. He is afraid that they will think that his appreciation for their gift of money (v. 10) is a left-handed dun for more money.

Not that I speak in regard to need

He does not want the Philippians to think that their gift was the source of his satisfaction. Although Paul is destitute in jail, money is not his primary concern.

The word "need" means to come short, hence, being in want. He has learned to be content no matter what his circumstances may be. Paul wants to dispel any thought that the Philippian delayed gift imposed any disruption of his soul.

Paul is not parlaying a subtle insinuation that they should send another gift. Paul was no panhandler, "Not that I seek for the gift" (v.17). He does not want them to construe that he was asking for more money. He is trying to establish the principle that he is independent from external circumstance.

For I have learned

Contentment is not something that comes naturally. In his early years he grew up in the lap of luxury. At that time he had not learned contentment. At this point in his life he is needy; yet he is content. Paul had to "learn" this virtue. He decidedly came to grips with this lesson (aorist tense). At the point of learning this, he entered into a new condition of his soul: "I have come to learn contentment." He did not always know contentment, even in his days of affluence.

"Contentment" is not automatic. Paul "learned" contentment in the School of Hard Knocks. Courses in that school are difficult. We think university is tough. It is not nearly as difficult as God's Graduate School. Can we say with the Psalmist, "It is good for me that I have been afflicted" (119:71)?

In whatever state I am

Paul is going through a mighty thin time. No matter what circumstance Paul faces, under any contingency, he is content. In this case, Paul stood in need of food, clothing and blankets. Even in this dire situation, he is independent of these things to fill his sense of satisfaction.

If we fill a bottle with coffee we cannot fill it with milk at the same time. One displaces the other. If we fill our lives with material things we have no room for Jesus Christ. If we make riches our central goal, we cannot find satisfaction that comes from Jesus Christ.

PRINCIPLE: Circumstances do not need to determine our state of mind. Our state of mind can be content if we learn that our source of satisfaction is Jesus Christ.

APPLICATION: Have you "learned" contentment. Do you expect contentment to come automatically? This is a hard lesson to learn in life. It will not come if we flunk God's school of financial set back. As long as we seek security in money, we will fail. God wants us to learn the lesson that security is found in Jesus Christ. We cannot go to school to learn this lesson. There is no textbook that will teach us how to be content. We learn the lesson in the hard knocks of life.

The prevailing philosophy of our day is that the more things we have the more life we have. Life is not made up of gadgets. Some of the most unhappy people in the world are wealthy celebrities who do not have a life. They are fabulously rich but miserable. Fame and fortune do not equate contentment. If we put these things as the core of our contentment we will never reach a sense of satisfaction.

To be content

The word "content" is a Stoic term. Stoic thought was a philosophy of self-sufficiency, very different from Christianity which finds its sufficiency in the Lord. To the Stoic, every resource for coping with life is found within the human being himself. The word means "sufficient in oneself." The Stoic was competent above all else. A Stoic person's state of mind was independent of all people and all things. He needed nothing and no one. The Stoic sought to eliminate all emotion and all desire. This is done by a doctrine of divine determination. He

must steel himself into acceptance of the inevitable, unrelenting circumstances of life. Emotions such as love and compassion get in the way of contentment. They eliminate the person and call it peace. This philosophy was inhuman. Elements of this philosophy still remain today.

Paul uses "content" in a different way. "Content" comes from two Greek words "self" and "sufficient." A content person is a self-sufficient person! Does this mean that Paul was self-sufficient? His sufficiency was not self-sufficiency but Christ-sufficiency, "I can do all things through Christ who strengthens me" (v.13). He was independent of circumstance because he was dependent upon Christ. The Stoic was self-sufficient but Paul was Christ-sufficient.

The word "content" may be a country that does not need to import. Canada is a nation of great natural resources. She could exist without any help from another country. She is self-contained. She has any agricultural or mineral product she needs to sustain herself.

Paul found greater contentment in hunger in the ministry of Christ than he did in the abundant banquet table of a wealthy man. He was a satisfied man as he sat destitute in jail.

Biblical contentment is not fatalism. He was not content "with" his circumstance but "in" his circumstance. However, this is not an acquiescence that blunts any ambition. No, it is freedom from anxiety. It puts in proportion the things that are important. It can put priority on the things of greatest value, "For our light affliction, which is but for a moment is working for us a far more exceeding and eternal weight of glory, while we do not look at the things which are seen, but at the things which are not seen. For the things which are seen are temporary, but the things which are not seen are eternal" (II Cor 4:17-18).

The noun of the word "content" occurs in II Cor 9:8 "And God is able to make all grace abound toward you, that you, always having all sufficiency in all things, may have an abundance for every good work" and I Tim 6:6, "Now godliness with contentment is great gain."

PRINCIPLE: Contentment does not derive from fatalism, indifference, hopelessness or resignation. Circumstances need not enslave us. We break the

bondage of enslavement to circumstance by contentment.

APPLICATION: Contentment is the opposite of covetous or greed. Money never satisfies us because we never get enough to gratify our desires. Life becomes perpetual resetting of monetary goals higher and higher. This is covetousness, "Covetousness, which is idolatry" (Col. 3:5).

The day a Christian comes to believe that contentment comes from God, that is the day of liberty from the circumstances of life, "Let you conduct be without covetousness; be content with such things as you have. For He Himself has said, 'I will never leave you nor forsake you'" (Heb. 13:5).

Philippians 4:12

I know how to be abased, and I know how to abound. Everywhere and in all things I have learned both to be full and to be hungry, both to abound and to suffer need.

Paul turns to how he coped with the extremities of his life. He knew how to be "abased" and he knew how to "abound." He was prepared for any circumstance that may come his way.

There are two "I know" phrases. Paul learned how to live in extremities. He adjusted to either with equal composure. This composure came through knowledge -- "know." He knew God's mind on how to handle adversity. He knew how to cope with set back.

The word "abased" means to run low as a falling river in a draught. Paul knew what it was like to be without food or clothing. He knew what it was like to go bankrupt. He knew plenty of adversity. This is abasement caused by want. He understood what it was like to be financially disgraced.

"Abased" is in the present tense which means he knew what it was like to be in a state of degradation.

The word "abound" means "overflow." At times it conveyed the idea of extreme wealth or abundance. It means to be highly successful. It requires as much spiritual maturity to handle abundance as it does poverty. It takes a steady hand to carry a full cup. When we are rich we do not need anything. We do not pray about very little.

Paul learned maturity in prosperity. He knew what it was like to be extremely successful. Yet he handled it well. When others express their admiration about you, does your ego pick this up? When others recognize your accomplishments, can you put yourself in balance? Can you keep your mind focused on the Lord?

David was an example of a person who did not handle prosperity very well. At the zenith of his success he came crashing down to defeat. At the pinnacle of his military victories he fell into adultery (II Sam. 11-13).

PRINCIPLE: Knowledge is a prerequisite to properly handle both adversity and prosperity.

APPLICATION: Very few of us know how to "abound." When we have a success, do we parade it? Do we laud a promotion to a person who has just lost his job?

"Everywhere" and "all things" show that Paul is prepared for every contingency. "Everywhere" is every particular case. Wherever Paul may be geographically located, he has learned this. A person's station or situation in life does not affect the poise of a mature person. A mature person does not have to live in Vancouver British Columbia (the most beautiful city in the world, by the way!!) or Phoenix Arizona to be happy. He can be content anywhere as long as he finds his composure in Christ (vv.11,13). We do not have to live in the best neighborhood in town to be happy.

"All things" means in all circumstances, in all cases. If we have all the money in the world, all the prestige we could possibly achieve, it still will not make us content. No amount of power will give us what contentment in Christ gives. No association in life will satisfy us. Our possessions will not satisfy. Status symbols will not satisfy. Economical status symbols are not the basis of happiness. People who live for status symbols are miserable.

PRINCIPLE: A mature believer prepares for any contingency he may face by contentment in Christ.

APPLICATION: Have the circumstances of life gotten you down? Are you enslaved to the details of life? As long as we make an idol out of our desires we will remain in slavery. True liberty comes by a life centered in Christ.

"I have learned" means to learn in the past with the result that he has established the principle of having learned this (perfect tense). This is no abstruse, nebulous or esoteric knowledge. This information comes from Scripture.

The word "learned" means initiation into an organization where certain information is well known. It is like initiation into a fraternity. This is the fraternity of those mature in Christ. Paul learned this lesson from God and from no other source. God revealed this secret to Paul apart from which he would have been unable to enter into contentment.

Paul introduces another pair of two extremes: very full and very hungry. "Full" and "hungry" are the second of three pairs for which Paul prepares himself.

"Full" means prosperity. It takes a mature Christian to live a dynamic spiritual life when he is extremely wealthy. The word "full" was used for a cow who loads up on grass after finding a good pasture. The cow sates and stuffs himself with grass. This is a figure for extreme prosperity. Paul knew how to carry wealth. Some of the most outstanding Christians I know are very wealthy. Their wealth is not the core of their life. Their money is a detail by which they serve Jesus Christ. This is Paul's point here.

Matthew 5:6 uses the word "full" for spiritual fullness,

"Blessed are those who hunger and thirst for righteousness,

For they shall be filled." We also need to know how to carry our spiritual prosperity!

Paul often faced hunger in his life. This was true in his present circumstance in jail. The Roman jail did not provide food. The prisoner depended on people from the outside to give them food.

PRINCIPLE: Contentment does not come automatically. It must be learned by being initiated into the fraternity of mature believers. In that fraternity God reveals himself through the Word of God.

APPLICATION: In the fraternity of the born again God shows believers how they can cope with both prosperity and adversity. Neither extreme wealth nor starvation upsets the equilibrium of the ma-

ture Christian because of his composure in Christ (vv.11,13).

Both to abound and to suffer need

This is the third pair of contingencies with which Paul learned to deal in his life.

The word "abundance" means over supply or over flow. This is a term for extreme prosperity. This is the second word for prosperity used in this verse. The first word "full" and the second word "abound" convey different meanings in the Greek. "Full" means abundance we receive (passive voice). "Abound" here means abundance for which we work (active voice). There are two kinds of prosperity: those who inherit it and those who work for it.

"Hunger" and "suffer need" are both terms of extreme adversity. "Suffer need" means to lack. When we fall behind in meeting our bills, how do we cope with that?

"Hunger" is something we get ourselves into (active voice). We bring it on ourselves. We do not manage our budget well enough. We go on spending sprees. "Suffer need" is something we receive (passive voice). This is the hunger that was of no fault of our own. An unanticipated change in the market brought our business into bankruptcy.

This means that there are 4 different circumstances of life with which we need to cope.

1. Prosperity where we earned it.
2. Prosperity where we fell into it.
3. Adversity where it was our fault.
4. Adversity where it was not our fault.

There is no experience in life that does not fall into one of these four categories. This makes the statement about composure in Christ even stronger. There is no experience in life that can keep us from inner composure. We can have stability and orientation to any situation in life. Our lives do not have to depend on the circumstances of life.

Detachment from things is a great strength. Paul would not chain his spirit to circumstances. He refused to allow his contentment to rest upon material possessions or physical comfort.

PRINCIPLE: The mature Christian can adjust to any contingency with equal contentment. Our circumstances will vary but our God does not vary. Circumstances change but inner composure never changes if Christ is the center of our lives.

APPLICATION: Paul was content under any contingency. He was content under every condition he faced. He had to learn this. He is able to be calm and confident in the midst of the most disturbing circumstance. He also refused to allow his peace and joy to be dependent upon material possessions and physical comforts. He did not chain his spirit to the satisfactions of the body.

There are depths in the ocean that the storms that lash the surface never reach. People who learn composure in Christ do not live on the surface but in the depth with Christ (v.13).

Most Christians are slaves to their circumstances. If circumstances are positive, they are happy; if circumstances are adverse, they are miserable. Maturity in Christ breaks the bonds of circumstance.

We cannot have contentment and at the same time sing the woes of financial difficulty. We cannot be content and at the same time carry arrogant pride.

Paul avoids the two dangers of discontentment or self-satisfied pride. Some people can take a great deal of adversity but do not know how to handle prosperity. They do not know how to handle life without restraint. Others are happy with plenty and become bitter when adversity hits. We need to learn how to endure both the lean years and the fat. The pendulum swings back and forth. Poise of character in Christ keeps us steady.

Philippians 4:13

I can do all things through Christ who strengthens me.

In verse 12 Paul gives various eventualities that he might face. No adversity can daunt him: "I can be rich or poor. I can be free or in prison. No matter what may come my way, I am content." Neither defeat or despair defeat him due to his financial difficulty. Although he is in jail, he is not discouraged. Although he is destitute, he is not down. Paul did not accomplish this through some super strength found in himself. He is utterly triumphant in the Lord. This was no idle boast.

This does not make Paul a superman. Paul was no independent person who did not need God. He did not make his mark on life by operation bootstraps. He rejected Stoic inner fortitude that took life with indifference. His disavowal of dependence on material things brings him to this popular verse.

Is this a pretentious claim? The medicine man in the former century made outlandish claims for his medicines. Does Paul make an unfounded claim here that he can "do all things"? Many Christians are skeptical of such statements like this in practice if not in theory. Most of us believe that we can do "some" things through Christ.

Obviously this verse is not license to do anything in the sphere of our will. That would place the mantle of sovereignty upon our shoulders. We are not omniscient, so why should we become omnipotent? The will of God limits the phrase "all things." "All things" refers to the will of God for the believer. This is not absolute power for the pleasure of Paul's desires or selfish plans. Whatever the Lord wishes him to do, God grants him the power to do.

The word "do" means to "have strength." This is efficacy or the power to prevail. God gives Paul the power to produce.

PRINCIPLE: Inner composure is inseparable from the sustaining power of God.

APPLICATION: The reason Paul was "content" (v.11) while in prison was due to the sustaining infused-strength from God. God delivered Paul from dependence on things. Can you depend on the Lord to meet your needs? Paul does not say, "I can do all things." That would be an empty boast. His strength was outside the inner resources of himself. "Not that we are sufficient of ourselves to think of anything as being from ourselves" (II Cor. 3:5). Do you trust the Lord for "ALL" things?

The basis for contentment is the Lord himself. We then to depend upon our own strength. We roll up our sleeves and say, "I will conquer this thing." We rely brain and brawn.

The first verb for strength in verse 13 is the word "do." That word means to prevail. Today we come to the second word for strength -- "strengthens."

The name "Christ" does not appear in the older manuscripts. He may have Christ in mind. This strength may come from multiple sources.

The Father gives strength: "And what is the exceeding greatness of His power toward us who believe, according to the working of His mighty power" (Eph. 1:19).

The Holy Spirit gives us strength, "But you shall receive power when the Holy Spirit has come upon you; and you shall be witnesses to Me in Jerusalem, and in all Judea and Samaria, and to the end of the earth" (Acts 1:8). Another passage that indicates the power of the Holy Spirit in us is Romans 15:13, "Now may the God of hope fill you with all joy and peace in believing, that you may abound in hope by the power of the Holy Spirit."

The Word of God gives us strength, "For the word of God is living and powerful, and sharper than any two-edged sword, piercing even to the division of soul and spirit, and of joints and marrow, and is a discerner of the thoughts and intents of the heart" (Heb. 4:12).

The Son also gives strength, "And He said to me, 'My grace is sufficient for you, for My strength is made perfect in weakness' (II Cor 12. 9). Compare also II Peter 1:3.

The Christian, therefore, has four different sources of strength!

The verb "strengthens" means to surcharge with energy. The word carries the idea of "infuse strength." This is endowed power or imparted strength. Endowed power is given to us. This power is not our own. It is someone else's power. We therefore possess power that is not our own. This power comes from God.

God imparts this strength to Paul because he is "in Christ." The literal rendering of this phrase is -- "in the one that strengthens me." Not only is Paul independent from material things but he does all things through or in Christ who puts strength into his life. This word means to pour strength into something or someone. The Lord renders Paul strong by pouring his strength into him.

Paul uses the noun of the Lord's relation to him in I Tim 1:12 and II Tim 4:17. He had spiritual power for life because Christ was his life. Note Eph 6:10.

Paul did not ultimately depend on anything but the Lord who infuses strength into him. That is why he did not want to leave the impression that he was in desperate need of financial support.

PRINCIPLE: God causes us to prevail through the infusion of his own strength into our lives.

APPLICATION: Are we careful to acknowledge the Lord's strength in our lives? Are we experiencing God's infused-strength?

Philippians 4:14

Nevertheless you have done well that you shared in my distress.

"Nevertheless" has the idea in this context of "notwithstanding." Paul repeats his commendation to the Philippians for sending their gift because he just said (vv11-13) that he does not need their gift! Just because he was spiritually self-sufficient, that does not mean he lacked appreciation for their gift.

The word "well" carries the concepts of noble, beautiful or excellent. Their gift was an honorable act. After Paul's assertion that he could get along without support from human sources, the Philippians may have thought that he was chastising them for their gift of money. He does not want to leave the impression that he is bad rapping their gift.

The Philippians shared jointly in Paul's distress. They sent Epaphroditus with a timely gift. The gift arrived at an opportune time. The gift was just what he needed while in jail. We do not send a refrigerator to an Eskimo. Their gift was appropriate. Some missionaries receive tea bags -- that have only been used once!!

Giving to another person is an act of fellowship. The word "my" is emphatic making their fellowship with his distress personal.

PRINCIPLE: Giving to another person is an act of fellowship. Paul is not commending the Philippians because they met his need; he is commending them because they met a need of their own -- fellowship.

APPLICATION: When we give to a church, missionary or parachurch organization, we have an eternal stake in that enterprise. The Philippians invested a stake in Paul. They had an investment

in him. Giving is an investment in eternal values. What kind of investment do you have in the cause of Christ? Have you entered into the fellowship of the cause of Christ financially? If a missionary or mission cause goes without, we are accountable because they are our representatives.

The idea that those in ministry should be kept poor because it keeps them humble is not the idea in this passage. Equality or sharing in ministry is the idea here.

Other passages from Scripture make a strong point about financially supporting the cause of Christ:

"Even so the LORD has commanded that those who preach the gospel should live from the gospel" (I Cor. 9:14). There is a connection between service and reward for that service. I Corinthians 9 argues for the financial support of those in ministry.

"Let him who is taught in the word share in all good things (finances) with him who teaches" (Gal. 6:6). Sharing links in this passage with giving to a teacher of the word.

"Let the elders who rule well be counted worthy of double honor, especially those who labor in the word and doctrine. For the Scripture says, 'You shall not muzzle an ox while it treads out the grain.' and 'The laborer is worthy of his wages'" (I Tim. 5:17,18). This is a unique verse in that it quotes both the Old Testament and the New Testament. Documentation from both the Old and New Testaments show financial support is crucial for the work of the Lord.

"There by Him let us continually offer the sacrifice of praise to God, that is, the fruit of our lips, giving thanks to His name. But do not forget to do good and to share (financially), for with such sacrifices God is well pleased" (Heb. 13:15,16). Again, financial support links with support of leadership in ministry.

PRINCIPLE: Financial support of the cause of Christ is an important link in God's plan for the world.

APPLICATION: Both the local church and individuals have a very definite financial obligation to God's servants. Has God saved your wallet as well as your life?

Philippians 4:15

Now you Philippians know also that in the beginning of the gospel, when I departed from Macedonia, no church shared with me concerning giving and receiving but you only.

Paul calls the Philippians by the name of their town. This is unusual (compare II Cor. 6:11; Gal. 3:1 (province)).

There is a contrast here. First, Paul commends the Philippians for their financial support (v.14) while he was in jail. Then he acknowledges that they remember how he received their gifts of ten years ago when they first came to Christ. They know that Paul gladly received their gifts.

Paul is making it clear to the Philippians that their generosity toward him was valid. He depends upon God (vv11-13) but God sends help by people. He recalls two previous situations by which they supported him financially.

The Philippians were raw heathen when Paul came to their city with the gospel. They had never heard the gospel. This is Acts 16 and 17 historically, about 10 years before his writing. Paul had to flee Philippi for his life. He went to Thessalonica.

Macedonia was the province where the city of Philippi was located. He went from Philippi to Thessalonica. Paul was in Thessalonica but three Sabbath days. At the most that would be less than a month. At the least it could have been less than two weeks. Yet after such a short time there, the Philippians sent two financial gifts to Paul while he was in Thessalonica. Thessalonica was a much larger city than Philippi. The Thessalonians had more economical resources. Yet it was the Philippians who had a heart to support Paul. They gave out of gratitude to Paul for bringing the gospel to them.

PRINCIPLE: Without the principle of giving, we cannot grow as we ought.

APPLICATION: If we could preach the gospel to the world without any financial involvement, it would be a loss to both individuals and the church. We would be deprived of the spiritual growth that comes from giving to the cause of Christ. Have you checked your giving to see if it reflects spiritual growth in your life?

Paul and his colleagues were beaten and thrown in a dungeon (Acts 16) in Philippi, "But even after we had suffered before and were spitefully treated at Philippi, as you know, we were bold in our God to speak to you the gospel of God in much conflict" (I Thess. 2:2). Ten years have now gone by. Paul is in jail in Rome writing back to the Philippians. He recalls those early years of their financial support.

The word "shared" is a mercantile expression meaning to render to the account of. The Philippians by their contribution to Paul opened an account with God. No other church opened an account in the ministry of the apostle during this period.

"Giving and receiving" refer to a double transaction. In the first transaction, gifts moved from the Philippians to Paul. In the next transaction, the blessings of having done that flow back to the giver. "If we have sown spiritual things for you, is it a great thing if we reap your material things?" (I Cor 9:11).

These words are business terms describing the credit and debit side of the ledger. The Philippians owned much to Paul since he led them to Christ and nurtured them in the faith. Thus Paul held credits on their ledger. It is only natural that they would honor that credit. "It pleased them indeed, and they are their debtors. For if the Gentiles have been partakers of their spiritual things, their duty is also to minister to them in material things" (Rom 15:27).

The Philippians formed a partnership with Paul in the gospel. They opened a co-account. That account holds both a debit and credit ledger. This is the giving and receiving.

No local church at this time shared their finances with Paul except the Philippians. They were in a class apart. Other churches could have shared with him but they chose not to do so. They had the opportunity. They knew of his need but they couldn't care less. There is a big difference between churches. Some care about the lost, others do not. Some churches are evangelistic oriented, others not.

Other churches helped Paul as well at other times (II Cor 9:8,9; 12:13). He refused to accept money from the Corinthians (I Cor 9:15-27; II Cor 11:9) because of their carnality. Paul may have been

referring to this situation in II Corinthians 11:8,9, "I robbed other churches, taking wages from them to minister to you (the Corinthians, a wealthy church, by the way). And when I was present with you, and in need, I was a burden to no one, for what I lacked the brethren who came from Macedonia (the Philippians) supplied. And in everything I kept myself from being burdensome to you, and so I will keep myself."

PRINCIPLE: When we give financially to the cause of Christ we enter into partnership (share) with God's servants.

APPLICATION: God keeps account of both credit and debit. If God were to ask you what column, credit or debit, is the biggest, what would you say? What is the size of your appreciation for the ministry of the gospel?

Are you a financial partner in the cause of Christ? When we enter into a partnership with a servant of God by supporting him, a special bond forms between the giver and servant of Christ. We "share" the ministry of the gospel together.

Philippians 4:16

For even in Thessalonica you sent aid once and again for my necessities.

Other churches contributed to Paul's ministry while he was in their area. The Philippian church contributed after he left into other parts of the world. They had a heart for missions anywhere.

Paul fled Philippi for his life. He traveled on the road Via Egnatia 92 miles to Thessalonica (Acts 17:1-9). There he received financial gifts from the Philippians.

The Philippians were prompt in their generosity. The word "even" indicates the Philippians sent the gifts shortly after he left Philippi (Acts 17:1).

Wealth does not make a giver. The Thessalonian church was wealthy but did not meet Paul's financial needs. The city of Thessalonica was larger and wealthier than Philippi. They were wealthy and active but had no vision for missions.

The words "once" and "again" emphasize repetition in the Greek. They sent money on more than one occasion. This is an acknowledgment of Paul's warm reception of their gifts.

This is remarkable since he was in Thessalonica for only a brief time. They were aggressive in their giving! They kept track of the needs of their missionary.

The donations were earmarked for Paul's needs. Evidently the Philippian church was the only church at this time that recognized that Paul had a stomach as well as a soul. Other churches no doubt prayed for him but the Philippian church supported him financially.

Apparently the Philippian gift was not enough to meet Paul's needs. He worked for a living at tent making while in Thessalonica (I Thess 2:9; II Thess. 3:7-9).

PRINCIPLE: Giving is a matter of the heart, not capacity.

APPLICATION: Do you have a heart for those without Christ? Do you have enough heart to affect your wallet or purse? What is your capacity? Do your capacity and your heart match your giving pattern? Do you have enough heart for missions that it may cost you something?

Philippians 4:17

Not that I seek the gift, but I seek the fruit that abounds to your account.

Paul here defends himself against slanderous gossip.

"Seek" is the word for intense desire. It deals with motive. Paul at the point of writing this epistle is not subtly hinting for another gift. He is not in quest of further financial help. He has already said that he "can do all things through Christ who strengthens me" (v.13). "I am not dependent upon you folks. I depend on the Lord. I will talk to my Father; he will take care of me."

Instead of rebuking the Philippians for their giving (v.14), Paul enlarges the scope of his appreciation for their gift. He is not hinting for more financial support (v.11).

The word "but" is strong contrast. The goal is not to receive support for himself but the growth of the giver. Giving develops Christian character.

"Fruit" is the payment that the gift will bring the donors and put to their credit. The fruit is more than the gift itself.

"Abounds" was used in the money markets in Paul's day for accumulation of interest. The word "accumulating" may be a good translation for "abounds." This word is a business or commercial term. The word is in the present tense -- this fruit currently accumulates to their account.

This is the blessing that experiences in rich development of character (John 15:16). The Philippians have interest accruing to their account. This is the result of their growth in character. Periodically their account gains interest. It accumulates dividends and will be paid at sometime in the future.

"To your account" -- God places this payment to the account of the Philippians. This account grows with each fresh demonstration of love. It is a good spiritual business investment where accumulation of interest grows.

It is not so much the gift but the giving that gave pleasure to the heart of Paul. God could have used any number of means to bring him support. He used a raven to feed Elijah. His real interest is in the spiritual fruit that comes to their lives when they exercise giving. When they give, they put an investment in the credit side of the ledger. In effect he says, "I am bent on the development of your generosity. The Divine Accountant will keep good records of your account. He will say, "Well done, thou good and faithful servant." What a difference from some methods of fund raising today! Paul says, "I am glad to get your gift, not for what it does for me, but for what it does for you. I want fruit to abound to your account."

PRINCIPLE: Every Christian has a character account. Either that account grows or decreases. It does not remain static. The capacity for grace is a great benefit for the Christian.

APPLICATION: God keeps good books. He is the Great Accountant. He never loses a figure. Our banks have our account down to the dime. We may not know how much we have in the bank but they do. God knows exactly what our account looks like. He knows how much surplus we have. He knows how much we owe. God is keeping an account of what we give to him.

Have you examined your books lately? Has the spirit of grace worked into your soul? Has your spirit gained what the Lord Jesus said, "It is more blessed to give than to receive"?

Philippians 4:18

Indeed I have all and abound. I am full, having received from Epaphroditus the things sent from you, a sweet-smelling aroma, an acceptable sacrifice, well pleasing to God.

Paul is still exercised lest the Philippians mistake his talk about money as a lobby for more.

The money that the Philippians sent was ample for his needs in jail. The word "have" is another business term. It is technical term meaning to draw up a receipt. Literally it means "to have in full." This term carries the idea of paid in full. It means to receive a sum and give a receipt. Paul received full payment from the Philippians. He acknowledges their gift. This statement is their receipt marked "paid in full."

The payment was not only made in full but it was more than enough -- "abound." It not only supplied his need, it went beyond his need. Paul views himself in prosperity while sitting in jail! He has more than enough to satisfy his needs.

This phrase is an acknowledgment of God's providential care of Paul. Trust in a God who cares grows as we experience God's care.

Epaphroditus carried the gift of money from Philippi to Paul in Rome (2:25-30). That gift he describes as "I have all and abound...I am full..." He received full payment and had a surplus in his bank account. The Greek indicates that he viewed filling as his status quo. There is no ingratitude on Paul's part.

The two words "from" indicate appreciation for the kindness of both Epaphroditus and the church.

PRINCIPLE: Giving is a barometer of our spiritual condition.

APPLICATION: Some of us have the attitude that if we had more, we would give more. The Philippian attitude was to give more first. If we wait to give more, we probably will not give more. We must begin with what we have with what God has given us. Then God will enable us to do yet more.

Paul does not specify what gifts they sent from Philippi. He simply describes them. First description -- "a sweet-smelling aroma."

The Philippian gift impacts both upon Paul and God. Paul welcomes the gift as an act of God upon

him. He highly regards the gift because God's hand was in it.

The gift also impacts God. It was a "sweet-smelling aroma" to God. "A sweet-smelling aroma, an acceptable sacrifice" is Old Testament language taken from the Levitical offerings (Ex 29:18; Ezek 10:41; Gen 8:21; Lev 1:9,13,17; 2:12).. Their gift smells sweet to God. It has the fragrance of perfume to God. This is an offering that pleases God.

There were two types of sacrifices in the Old Testament: 1. Sacrifice for sin. 2. Sacrifices that bring worship. The second usage (worship) is the idea in this passage. God accepts our contributions to his cause as praise and thanksgiving to his name.

"Sweet-smelling aroma" is also used of Christ's offering up of himself upon the altar of the cross, "And walk in love, as Christ also has loved us and given Himself for us, an offering and a sacrifice to God for a sweet-smelling aroma" (Eph. 5:2).

We have an idiom in the English language that says, "Something does not smell right here." That is a negative image. "Sweet-smelling aroma" has a positive connotation. This offering smelled good to Paul and to God.

PRINCIPLE: Giving is an act of worship.

APPLICATION: We worship when we give to the work of Jesus Christ. That is why it smells sweet to God. Do you please God by giving to his work as an act of worship? When you drop your offering into the offering plate, are you consciously doing it as an act of worship? When you write a check to a servant of God, are you doing it as an act of worship?

Three descriptions of an offering that glorifies God is set forth in this verse: 1. "A sweet-smelling aroma" 2. "An acceptable sacrifice" 3. "Well pleasing to God." Today we come to the second description -- "An acceptable sacrifice."

This sacrifice was first acceptable to Paul then it was acceptable to God. When we give to God's servants, it pleases God. If we find anything in the Bible that pleases God we should take note of it. If we want to please God, we should give financially to God's work. Children who have enough sense to please their parents undergo an easier life. It would not be so difficult to extract 10\$ from their parents. If we would learn this lesson about God,

we would find that he is favorably inclined toward us.

The word sacrifice means "to slay." This is not the act of sacrifice but "the thing slain." In the Old Testament this word was used of animal sacrifices. Their gift was a sacrifice (II Cor. 8:1-5). They gave out of poverty. Here it is a money sacrifice that is acceptable to God.

This "acceptable sacrifice" is propitious (satisfying) to God. He regards our offering of money with favor.

PRINCIPLE: When we give, we give not only to God's servants but to God himself. It is a sacrifice to God. Monetary sacrifice praises God. God puts a premium on giving that comes from love.

APPLICATION: God deems money given to God's servants as a sacrifice to himself. It rejoices the heart of God. God gives us the responsibility to glorify himself with our resources. We glorify him, not only with our surplus, but with every dime we own. The money he gives us not ours, but his and ours. The service of giving to the cause of Christ not only encourages and advances the cause of Christ, but it is an act of worship. God takes pleasure in this.

The third and last description of giving that glorifies God is that it pleases him -- "Well pleasing to God."

The sacrifice of giving pleases God. The words "well pleasing" are used in Hebrews 13:15,16 regarding the sacrifices as here, "Therefore by Him let us continually offer the sacrifice of praise to God, that is, the fruit of our lips, giving thanks to His name (this is a verbal sacrifice). But do not forget to do good and to share (give money), for with such sacrifices God is well pleased."

PRINCIPLE: We please God both with our lips and our giving.

APPLICATION: Are you in the business of pleasing God? One way to please God is giving to the cause of Christ.

Philippians 4:19

And my God shall supply all your need according to His riches in glory by Christ Jesus.

This verse is a popular verse often quoted out of context.

The "and" indicates that v.19 is an outcome of what he has just said. This paragraph treats God's faithfulness in using the Philippians to meet the financial needs of Paul in jail. The Philippians met Paul's need. Now God will meet their need. This is a quid pro quo. God used the Philippians to meet Paul's need in jail. God will also meet the Philippians' ability to give. What affects Paul affects God. God will exchange compliments. God is faithful to his people. He will not stand in debt to his people.

The context of God meeting our financial needs is in the environment of our meeting the needs of others. In verse 18 the Philippians gave an acceptable sacrifice that was a sweet smelling aroma to God. If everything is flowing out and nothing flowing in, the Philippians will themselves be put in jeopardy financially. God will not allow those who give sacrificially to go in want. We cannot out give God. He has a bigger shovel.

The promise here is that God will supply "all" the needs of the Philippians, not just some of them. God's supply is comprehensive of every type of need. Whether our need is temporal or spiritual, God will meet it.

Luke 6:38, Give, and it will be given to you: good measure, pressed down, shaken together, and running over will be put into your bosom. For with the same measure that you use, it will be measured back to you.

Psalms 37:25, Yet I have not seen the righteous forsaken, Nor his descendants begging bread.

Prov. 3:9,10, Honor the Lord with our possession, And with the firstfruits of all your increase; So your barns will be filled with plenty, And your vats will overflow with new wine.

PRINCIPLE: God supplies our need when we meet someone else's need. God will commemorate sacrificial giving.

APPLICATION: Are you generous with others? Are you a stingy person? Is the reason you hang onto your money so, is that you do not believe that God will supply your need? Do you believe that God will "resupply" you if you give to his cause? God's commemorative giving does not apply to every believer. It only applies to those who

have given sacrificially. Do you believe God will reimburse your generosity?

God will supply their need according to the standard of his own wealth. The words "according to" mean according to the norm or standard. The standard is the limitless wealth of God in eternity. God gives out of the capital of his grace in eternity.

God will supply their need not "out of" his riches but "according to" his riches. God will supply riches in ratio to his personal wealth. If I have two million dollars and you asked me for two hundred dollars and I gave you the two hundred, I would give out of my two million, not according to my two million. I would not give in ratio to my two million.

God does not operate on human standards. We cannot bribe God. Some people want fame, wealth or a beautiful girl. They feel that if they give, God will give them what they want. They treat God like a genie. God, however, does not operate on a barter system. The Philippians did not approach God like that. They gave out of love for the Lord and Paul.

God guarantees to supply all need of those who faithfully give to the cause of Christ. God will dispense ("supply") riches in abundance.

Note the contrasts in this passage: "You met Paul's need; I will bless you according to my riches. You supplied one of my needs; I will supply all of your needs. You supply out of poverty; I will dispense out of my riches in glory. You supplied by the hand of Epaphroditus; I will supply by Christ."

God administers his supply to the giver through Jesus Christ.

PRINCIPLE: God meets the financial status of the believer, not "out of" his wealth, but "according to" his wealth. God gives commensurate with his capacity.

APPLICATION: Do you believe that God's reimbursement to you will be in commensurate with his eternal riches? Do you believe that God will reward you according to that which befits his wealth? This passage is a promise that God will reimburse you on a scale worthy of his wealth.

Philippians 4:20

Now to our God and Father be glory forever and ever. Amen.

God is glorified unto eternity for the contents of the whole book of Philippians. God is glorified, for example, by his provisions for Paul and the Philippians themselves. Ascription of glory to God recognizes his nature and attributes.

"Amen" means it is true. Paul affirms the truth of the wonder of God.

The ultimate test of whether something is worthwhile is whether it brings glory to God. Paul's jail term brought glory to God.

PRINCIPLE: God's glory is the ultimate purpose for creation.

APPLICATION: The purpose for our life centers on God himself. God is the end of creation, not man. If you are sick today, glorify God in your sickness. If you face a mundane day, reflect the greatness of God and he will change the mundane to eternal purpose. No adversity is without opportunity to glorify God. All blessings of one's life are opportunities to magnify the greatness of God.

Philippians 4:21

Greet every saint in Christ Jesus. The brethren who are with me greet you.

Now we come to the conclusion and farewell of the book of Philippians (4:21-23).

Greetings come from a number of sources. First, Paul sends his own greeting.

Final greetings come to the Philippians from Paul, from his fellow workers, from other believers and from the Praetorian Guard.

"Every saint" means every individual believer in Philippi. No matter how humble that believer may be, he wanted to make sure they received his greeting. Every individual receives his greeting. No one is unimportant to him.

Paul's companion greets the Philippians. This is the second greeting. They were probably Paul's traveling companions such as Timothy.

Philippians 4:22

All the saints greet you, but especially those of Caesar's household

The third category of people who greet the Philippians are the "saints." "All the saints" is probably the believers in the church at Rome (1:1).

We will study the fourth and last greeting, the greeting from a powerful political force in the Roman empire, next time.

Greetings are characteristic of Paul's letters. He was considerate of people. He loved people.

PRINCIPLE: Greeting shows consideration of others.

APPLICATION: Thoughtfulness of people is a core value of Christianity. Today when you pass by others, will you honor their presence with a greeting? Will you show interest in others and their concerns? Is everyone in your purview important to you, no matter who "insignificant" to others they may be?

The fourth category of people greeting the Philippians is "Caesar's household."

The word "especially" means "in greatest degree." With a special touch Paul concludes the book of Philippians with emphatic emphasis upon God's sovereign work in spite of his adversity in jail. He singles out the Praetorian Guard for special mention.

Caesar's household is not the members of the family of Caesar. They are not his kin. The imperial guard was the institution that chose the Caesar. Paul led many of these men to Christ while in prison. The Philippians had part in their salvation by their support of the apostle. The Praetorian Guard (one of the most powerful political institutions of the Roman empire, 1:13) gives greeting to this motley little church in Philippi!!

No wonder Paul could say that what had happened to him advanced the gospel (1:12). If the Praetorian Guard could live for Christ in that institution, we can live for Christ in school, business, police force.

PRINCIPLE: God uses the weak to win the strong.

APPLICATION: Sometimes we preempt God's work in our lives. We under value what God can

do through us. A false belief among some is that God could never use them to reach people more intelligent, more wealthy or more important than they are. "But God has chosen the foolish things of the world to put to shame the wise, and God has chosen the weak things of the world to put to shame the things which are mighty" (I Cor. 1:27). If God can use a jail-bird to reach the Praetorian Guard, he can use us. If God can use the Philippians to facilitate world evangelism in the first century, he can do that through us in the twenty-first century.

Philippians 4:23

The grace of our Lord Jesus Christ be with you all. Amen.

Paul's usual practice was to close his epistles with an emphasis upon God's matchless grace. Paul concludes Philippians with a closing prayer for them. The prayers of the saints often reveal their heart. Paul's heart was that the Philippians would experience the grace of God.

This is more than a formal or customary greeting. The greeting has deep meaning to Paul. This is the deepest desire of the apostle. Paul above all else

wants the Philippians to experience of God's grace upon their lives. Grace is a center piece in the salutations and conclusions of Paul's epistles.

The Lord Jesus Christ is the source of grace: "For you know the grace of our Lord Jesus Christ, that though He was rich, yet for your sakes He became poor, that you through His poverty might become rich" (II Cor 8:9). "The grace of the Lord Jesus Christ, and the love of God, and the Holy Spirit be with you all. Amen." (II Cor 13:14).

"Amen" means "so be it." Paul affirms his belief system: "May the Philippians experience the grace of God day by day in their lives."

PRINCIPLE: The grace of God is a central operating principle for Christian living. The grace of God is his provisions for us. He gives these provisions without merit.

APPLICATION: Are you conscious of God's provisions in your life? Do you know what those provisions are? Are you able to use those provisions for what you face day by day. Is the grace of God operative in your experience? Is the grace of God "with you?"