

Book of Philippians

Philippians is known as the “joy book of the Bible.” The word Philippians means 'lover of horses' but a better translation is 'lovers of the race.' The Philippians were not just serious about running the race, they were serious about winning the race for the prize of God's high calling.

1 Corinthians 9:24

Know ye not that they which run in a race run all, but one receiveth the prize? So run, that ye may obtain.

Philippians was not written to all Christians in general, because these Philippians were an elite people, a special company who were running the race to win the crown. They were given the unspeakable opportunity to win the prize of God's high calling in Christ Jesus and a chance to be a part of His bride.

This book speaks about what it means to be on the racecourse to God's best and how to determine that prize the apostle Paul is talking about. Just because people are taking their place in the heavenlies and laying hold of more spiritual truth does not mean they are actually on the racecourse.

There are four divisions in this book that are perfectly separated into four chapters:

Chapter 1: Christ is the essence of life. He is very God of very God. He is God in the flesh.

Without Him we have no life.

Chapter 2: Christ is the firm and unquestionable foundation in the background of the believer's faith. He fits it all; everything in the Old Testament, and everything from eternity past. He is the answer to it all.

Chapter 3: Christ becomes the goal, or the reward of your life. He is not only the life and foundation, the all in all, He is the coming Bridegroom of the church.

Chapter 4: Christ becomes the strength for us to attain the high calling of God which is in Him. He enables us, and He is our strength. He calls us to be His bride, and He qualifies us.

Song of Solomon 2:10

My beloved spake, and said unto me, Rise up, my love, my fair one, and come away.

It is Jesus all the way, and it will be Jesus forever. To live is Christ, and this is the love language shared between Christ and His bride.

Paul was in prison when he wrote this book, but he had joy unspeakable and full of glory. He rejoiced because he knew he was exactly where he needed to be. It took all the heartaches,

the downsettings, the uprisings, and all the things he went through to take him to the place where he said, "Christ liveth in me." By God's grace every runner of the race wants to get to that same place.

CHAPTER 1

VERSE 1

Paul and Timotheus, the servants of Jesus Christ, to all the saints in Christ Jesus which are at Philippi, with the bishops and deacons:

Paul and Timotheus

The name Paul means 'little,' and the name Timotheus means 'to honor God.' These names are fitting, because we will never really honor God the way we should until we become little.

John 3:30

He must increase, but I must decrease.

At one time Paul was the chief of sinners, in complete rebellion against Christ. He had been extremely zealous of the law, and was killing Christians until Jesus saved him. Timotheus, on the other hand, grew up loving the Lord. Paul was a Jew, a Pharisee, and Timotheus grew up with the faith of a mother and grandmother, and that faith flowed out of his life. Paul was an old Jew, and Timothy was a young Christian. This shows that God is no respecter of persons. We are never too old to begin the race to win Christ. Our God is an awesome and loving God.

The servants of Jesus Christ

This is Paul saying he is a bond servant of the love of Christ, and he truly is a prisoner of love. There is a beautiful rest and a peace for us when the true agape love comes to rest in us. When this happens is when we truly live the theme and the calling of the book of Ephesians which is, 'Us in Christ.'

The saints in Christ Jesus

Paul is addressing the saints at Philippi. All of Paul's greetings everywhere were symbolic of saints in the heavenlies. What is so peculiar about the Philippian saints is their love for the race and the racecourse. Commentary on the race can be found in I Corinthians 9:24-27 and in Hebrews 12:1-2. This race has nothing to do with salvation because salvation is free, but winning Christ as bridegroom is not free, and it is not automatic.

The Philippian saints are a precious church, and this is about the state of the heart. These saints have hearts that love His appearing, and they dearly love Paul's gospel. They are fully purposed saints, and they want to hear the truth in order to win the race. This letter, like no other, may

encourage us and show us the value of the joy and rejoicing of pressing forward in our run. By God's grace let us run joyfully toward the mark for the prize of God's high calling in Christ Jesus.

Bishops and deacons

Bishop means 'caretaker,' and deacon means 'one who serves.' Paul mentions these because he appreciates their stand, and because he knows the hardships and the battles they face. When God appoints someone to take a place such as teachers, bishops, deacons, He allows that place to be tested and tried. The enemy wants to get at them if God will allow it, and God will allow it if it gives Him an opportunity to show himself faithful. We don't have trials to seem like great failures, we have trials to show God is faithful and that He loves us. Every trial we come up against is before-ordained, and He is able and faithful for all of them. We stand, withstand, and having done all we stand.

Philippi was an evil and dangerous place, and that city hated anything to do with Jesus. People had to hide to pray, or go outside the city (without the camp). But it's never about surroundings and circumstances, because God is bigger than the worst surroundings and circumstances. God makes a way where there appears to be no way.

VERSE 2

Grace be unto you, and peace, from God our Father, and from the Lord Jesus Christ.

Grace be unto you

Grace is the element in which all our God-given power awakens, and it works in a glorious service that will end in God's best. Grace is there at all times, and has to be received at all times. If we are going to live a life rejoicing in the Lord, and a life of joy unspeakable and full of glory, it has to be by grace. Grace makes it possible to apprehend that undeserved favor and love all the time. Without grace we could never grow up one bit.

2 Peter 3:18

Grow in grace, and in the knowledge of our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ. To Him be glory both now and forever. Amen.

The provision is always there for the abundance of that all-purpose grace. If we don't claim the grace for everything then the spiritual blessings lie dormant, and we never fully live the promises of God. Paul wanted those at Philippi to see and know the grace of God, because grace is absolutely essential for the race.

Peace

Those who enter the racecourse and those who are on the racecourse need the peace of God desperately. Peace comes by grace, so peace will exist where grace abides. Since peace always comes by grace, we could never attain it by our own efforts, or in our own strength. Without peace there will be anxiety and unrest.

From God our Father, and the Lord Jesus

This is a statement of true love. This is like the Lord is speaking to us about how in love with us He is. This is spoken through brother Paul, but the words come from the Lord himself. We are the apple of His eye, and He delights in us. Father God and Christ Jesus are the headwaters of everything, and from who will flow everything we will ever have naturally or spiritually. Everything concerning us must come from them.

Hebrews 4:10

For he that is entered into His rest, he also has ceased from his own works, as God did from His.

There is a rest and a peace in Christ Jesus. All Christians have peace with God, but we can only have that peace of God through grace. When grace and peace reign in a life, that life loses its stress and strain.

In verses 3-5 we find Paul's prayer of remembrance. It is a sweet Christian who brings joy and peace to the hearts of other Christians. The Philippian saints were not only responding to Paul's gospel, they were living the victory.

VERSE 3

I thank my God upon every remembrance of you,

Paul's prayers are not always asking for things. Prayer is not always just petition, but it is also worship, thanksgiving, and adoration of the Lord, and rejoicing in Him for what He has done. Our Lord loves the prayers of His saints.

Paul founded this Philippian assembly when he was forbidden by the Holy Spirit to go into Asia, so he went instead to Macedonia, and this assembly came about because of that. It came through much pain and sorrow.

VERSE 4

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

Always in every prayer

There are certain things Paul requests for them that will be seen later in this chapter. "Always in every prayer" means 'in all things always, and in every prayer.' Paul doesn't say this about any other group of believers. This is the only group that God encourages Paul's heart to make mention of this, and truly they have the state of the heart, and the love of the body that flows in the life of the readied wife who is full of joy. Their lives become more and more harmonious as they yield more and more to God. There is no friction, only joy and peace.

Making request with joy

Everything the Holy Spirit places upon brother Paul's heart for these saints is joy. Joy or rejoicing is mentioned 14 times in this epistle. Overcoming saints are joyful saints. Joyful shouldn't be confused with happiness. This is about the joy of the Lord, and this is what brings the inner joy and exhilaration that we experience when we yield to God. These special and elite people were a joy unto Paul. The joy of the Lord is our strength.

VERSE 5

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

Your fellowship

The word fellowship means 'participation or sharer.' When we share in the gospel we have fellowship, and as far as participation these people really participated in the message. They were not just takers, they were givers also, and this should be true of us as well. This giving doesn't mean just money, but giving of themselves. This was a joy and a wonder to Paul, because these people were really given over to the gospel. Anything we become in the Lord has nothing to do with us, but rather it is in the fellowship of the gospel. There is nothing else. All is in the gospel of Christ.

From the first day until now

Sometimes when people hear the grace message for the first time, they embrace it immediately. They just seem to know that it is truth, and they reach out, embrace it and love it, and grow up in it to become that readied wife. The people who get away from the gospel of Christ find friction, strife, and unrest. They have no peace. The gospel must be embraced and clung to. Anything not based on the fellowship of the gospel will end in ruin. Fellowshiping in the gospel of Christ will never end in disappointment. Anything that would supplant the fellowship in the gospel will hurt our walk.

For these Philippian saints it was all about Jesus, and meditating on the good report. They were not occupied with the wrongs, the injustices, the gossip, or any evil thing, because it was always the Word of Paul's glorious gospel of the bridal message. They never gave any leeway to the devil that would keep them off track. Dwelling on the things that should be left behind will defeat our lives. We are not appointed to wallow in the mire and live in disgrace, but instead we are appointed to rise up and become more than conquerors through Christ Jesus who loves us.

Philippians 3:13

Brethren, I count not myself to have apprehended: but this one thing I do, forgetting those things which are behind, and reaching forth unto those things which are before.

VERSE 6

Being confident of this very thing, that He which hath begun a good work in you will perform it until the day of Jesus Christ:

Being confident

The word 'being' speaks of a state of right now, not someday. This is a state of complete confidence. The word 'confident' means 'there is no doubt, it is absolute.' There is no trying to get there, because by faith we are there. This is especially true of the Philippian racecourse overcomers. Paul was confident in what God was going to do with these saints, and that was because they believed the grace of God for everything in their lives.

This very thing

What they were confident in was that the good work God began in them, they knew He would perform until the day of our Lord Jesus. God has such a tremendous inheritance and investment in His people. When God gave His Son Jesus to save us He gave us everything, and God wants to give back to His Son the absolute fullness of the fruit of redemption. God is doing a very special thing through the power of the Holy Spirit, and He will finish what He started in us. God has a definite work to do in the lives of His people, those who are in the race to win Christ Jesus as Bridegroom. We are His workmanship.

Ephesians 2:10

For we are His workmanship, created in Christ Jesus unto good works, which God hath before ordained that we should walk in them.

God created the initial impulse for us to run the race, and He then brings us to maturity. He begins that work in us, and He completes the work in us. Our responsibility is to yield to Him and His operation, and it is His responsibility to finish us to be Christ's bride. The promise of being part of the bride of Christ is not a promise to all Christians. That promise is for those who give themselves completely to Paul's gospel.

VERSE 7

Even as it is meet for me to think this of you all, because I have you in my heart; inasmuch as both in my bonds, and in the defense and conformation of the gospel, ye are all partakers of my grace.

Meet for me

Paul's gospel is what God desires for us. It is the very heart of the bride. We are to follow Paul as he followed Christ, because this is what God desires for us in order to win Christ as Bridegroom and finish the race with a full joy.

I have you in my heart

In verse 3 they were on his mind and in his prayers, but now he has them in his heart, and they are in the very heart of God. This is the heart of the virtuous woman, and that Christ-like heart will be the heart of the bridal saints. Paul had them in his heart, but there is no doubt they had Paul in a very special place in their hearts, and Paul knew this. There were three reasons Paul knew he was in their hearts: 1) they were in his heart, 2) they were in his bonds, and 3) the confirmation of the gospel. By these three things Paul knew he was in their hearts, and they entered in and partook of his afflictions, and were sympathetic toward him. Paul called his

bonds his defense of the gospel, and his confirmation of the gospel his grace. This is one of the unlikely ways grace is used in scripture. The saints at Philippi were not ashamed of Paul, and not ashamed of his gospel or his bonds. They did indeed partake of his bonds.

Partakers of grace

These Philippian saints laid hold of grace through Paul's gospel of grace. Without Paul's gospel there is no way to be the Lamb's wife. The completion of this message of divine grace and agape love is what will make us that readied wife for Christ Jesus.

VERSE 8

For God is my record, how greatly I long after you all in the bowels of Jesus Christ.

God is my record

This is Paul expressing his great longing after these saints. He is realizing that God knows his heart, and the love he has for these bridal saints. He is saying that God is his record of how greatly he longed after them.

In the bowels of Jesus Christ

The word 'bowels' means 'to look into someone's heart.' This refers to the innermost feelings of our Lord. These are the most intimate terms, the intimate love of Christ within Paul. But this was the heart of Jesus Christ and not anything of Paul. The heart of Christ that Paul had was what longed after the saints, and what joined him to them.

VERSE 9

And this I pray, that your love may abound yet more and more in knowledge and in all judgment;

This I pray

Paul has been giving thanks in previous verses for these Philippian saints, but here he begins to pray that their love abound more and more. He prays for more love for them so that they never become complacent.

Love may abound

The word 'abound' means 'to be over and above.' Abounding love involves more quality and quantity. Paul is encouraging these saints on to more abounding love. God so wants us to have His abounding love in our hearts, because we will need to have this love in order to win Christ Jesus. We should abound in what God has put in our hearts, because he has called us to be lovers of the race. Going back to verse 6, He tells us He will perform the good work He began in us, and we can rest assured that He knows exactly what He is doing. We have this promise on our lives when we are lovers of the race. The full overcomers seek the abounding agape love, which is God's divine love. Joy saints don't wrestle with the love of God, they just embrace it by His grace. Everything we face has the love of God in it, and He is the one who orders everything for our lives.

In knowledge

The love Paul prayed for these saints to have was 'in knowledge and judgment.' I Corinthians 8:1 contrasts knowledge without love.

1 Corinthians 8:1

Now as touching things offered unto idols, we know that we all have knowledge. Knowledge puffeth up, but charity edifieth.

Paul wanted their knowledge to be as a result of occupying love, in the knowledge of scripture, and in the knowledge of Christ. The more we love Christ the more knowledge we attain of Him. This love just keeps abounding and growing.

In all judgment

The word 'judgment' means 'discernment or participation.' Once again it is love that controls these things.

VERSE 10

That ye may approve things that are excellent; that ye may be sincere and without offence till the day of Christ;

That

This is saying that Paul wants them to have the love that:

1) Approve things that are excellent.

This is speaking of things that are excellent, or things that are different. Only love can make us that objective. Being filled with resentment, greed, or bitterness means we can't be objective. There must be no pretense and no thought to want to be seen in an individual. Do nothing for thanks or to be appreciated, but do things for love's sake.

2) Be sincere.

The word sincere means 'clear to the light, or tested by sunlight.' This is to be tested by God's Word. The Bible tells us that God's Word is light. Jesus said, "I am the true light that lighteth every man that comes into the world." He is the light that chases away darkness if men will but believe Him. Divine love is the only thing that can test sincerity, and show something that is clear or sincere in the light of God's Word.

3) Without offence until the day of Christ.

The word offence means 'to kick the toe, to stumble.' It is divine love concerning God's truth that is the only way we can keep from stumbling. Not being objective can cause this, so abounding love in knowledge and in judgment will produce the values in this verse, and this is the only way they will come. Everything is predicated on divine love, the love of Christ. We don't want to stumble people or be rough with them, and we shouldn't try to be disagreeable or a burden, but instead we should let the Lord make us a joy. Diamonds cut diamonds, but the diamonds that cut are not the ones set in the crown. Only the diamonds that receive the cutting are the ones that are set in the crown.

VERSE 11

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

Filled with the fruits of righteousness

The fruits of righteousness come only by Jesus Christ and the only way we can be filled with the fruits of righteousness is always by Jesus Christ.

John 15:5

I am the vine, ye are the branches: He that abideth in Me, and I in him, the same bringeth forth much fruit: for without Me ye can do nothing.

The branches draw their life from the vine, and this produces the very life of the vine. If we have God's love, and are enriched with the fruits of eternity, and if we are enlightened and warmed by the grace of God, our entire life will become transformed and changed from glory to glory; even to His very likeness.

Unto the praise of God

We can't be self-centered, self-willed, angry, and defiant and be a Philippian saint. We can be like Him, and of Him, and our lives can live and breathe the glory of the Father. It's all in Christ, and He is the one who makes us righteous. Because He makes us righteous we will be a benefit to men when we produce this fruitfulness. But the main benefit is for God, and this is the main purpose of it. When we produce fruitfulness as a direct result of that life of Christ being produced in us, then it is unto the glory and praise of God.

VERSE 12

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

Ye should understand

This verse is an enlargement of Romans 8:28:

Romans 8:28

And we know that all things work together for good to them that love God, to them who are the called according to His purpose.

Nothing just happens in the life of a Christian, because everything in our lives, good or bad, comes from God. Someday we will see and understand how these things were very definitely for our good. What seems to us a menace turns us into the wife of the beautiful Lamb. We shouldn't count the trials He allows into our lives as strange, but rather look at them as an opportunity to praise Him, and thank Him for making our lives more and more like the life of our precious Lord and Savior Jesus Christ.

Things that happened to me

What happened to Paul included much suffering from beatings, imprisonment, shipwrecks, persecution, etc. Paul's attitude toward his sufferings was that he saw them as things unto the furtherance of the gospel. He didn't see them as a detriment, but rather as something that was going to produce.

Genesis 50:20

Ye thought evil against me; but God meant it unto good, to bring to pass as it is this day, to save much people alive.

The things in our lives that seem to be detrimental should be viewed as something that produces something greater in our lives. What the devil means for evil in our lives, God uses these things to create a more intimate and meaningful relationship with Him. All these things have fallen out for the furtherance of the gospel.

VERSE 13

So that my bonds in Christ are manifest in all the palace, and in all other places;

We find in verses 13-15 that there are three things that have fallen out because of what happened to Paul:

1) My bonds in Christ.

Paul was a prisoner of the love of Christ, and this is a good prison for any Christian to be in. Paul considered himself a love slave, and that is exactly what he wanted to be.

In all the palace

Paul's gospel went everywhere, even to the palace, but Paul isn't giving the Roman government any credit for his imprisonment. He knew and accepted the fact that it was God's purpose for him to be there. Because of the things Paul went through the gospel became more manifested.

Acts 9:15-16

15) The Lord said unto him, Go thy way: for he is a chosen vessel unto Me, to bear my name before the Gentiles, and kings, and the children of Israel.

16) For I will show him how great things he must suffer for My name's sake.

This is what God did in Paul.

VERSE 14

And many of the brethren in the Lord, waxing confident in my bonds, are much more bold to speak the Word without fear.

2) Brethren waxing confident in my bonds.

Paul was an inspiration to these brethren. This was in a time when people were beaten, killed, and having families who were Christian taken away and put in prison. Paul's stand for the gospel made them more confident in continuing in the gospel. Romans 8:28 reigned in

Paul's life, and his stand began to make those around him reign in it also. Everyone around Paul could see his bonds and his victory were in Christ. They began to realize that Paul's life was fed and nourished by Christ, and this feeding and refreshing has always been the strength of God's children. This strength and refreshing set God apart, and Paul was not an ordinary person. The secret resources of might and courage that came to him that were not natural, and they were inexhaustible.

More bold to speak the Word without fear

Because of Paul's inspiration, others became bolder to speak the Word without fear, and there was much to fear in that day. Paul's strong attachment to Christ made others bold and unafraid. The fruits of Paul's testing became a spiritual stimulus to those at Rome.

VERSE 15

Some indeed preach Christ even of envy and strife; and some also of good will:

3) Some indeed preach Christ.

Through his faithfulness God is showing that truth sometimes even comes out of those with wrong motives. Christ is preached when the Word of God is rightly divided. The truth may come from the lips of those with wrong motives in their hearts, but God has ways to bring it to pass. The Word of God never returns void.

Envy and strife

Most likely there were ministers who were jealous of Paul, and were opposed to him possibly because of he was a great missionary and because he spoke with such authority. Preaching the gospel is not about influencing people, but this was no doubt what they were about. Paul didn't have time for such things, and he stood for the gospel under all circumstances. Our fellowship is not about causes, principles, or politics. It is first, last, and always about the divine Word of God rightly divided. The truth should be in the hearts of those who preach it.

Some of good will

These good will preachers had no hidden agenda, or ulterior motives or purposes because it was the love of God that constrained them. They spoke the truth in love, and the truth spoken in love caused those who heard their preaching to grow up in all things. These good will preachers knew that Paul was God's chosen vessel, and that God had revealed the mystery of the bride to him. These preachers preached out of love and were in harmony with God.

To be constrained means 'to be bound together.' It is God's love that binds us together and embraces us. It was the love of Christ that went to the cross, and it was the love of the Holy Spirit that searched us out. We can't be anything or do anything without this love in our lives, and the gospel can only work in us by the love of Christ. If we are not filled with love we are not filled with God, and if we don't love our brother we don't know the love of God.

VERSE 16

The one preach Christ of contention, not sincerely, supposing to add affliction to my bonds:

Some preach of contention

Preaching of contention shows they were putting themselves forward and magnifying themselves rather than magnifying the Word of God. They were not preaching Christ sincerely, or with clarity, because it was about them and not about Christ. People should always see Christ and not a person when the Word is preached.

Add afflictions to my bonds

These preachers were taking advantage of Paul's imprisonment to preach contention, thereby adding affliction to his bonds. How sad, these were once preaching truth, but they allowed the enemy to take them out of love. If there is no love, the Holy Spirit is not leading that person. Christ loves at all times, and there is absolutely not one trace of hate in Him. There were those in that day that followed Paul from city to city, and actually added to his misery by trying to tear down what he was building up.

VERSE 17

But the other of love, knowing that I am set for the defense of the gospel.

Others of love

These are the preachers who truly had Christ's love in their hearts, and they spoke the truth in that love. Undoubtedly they, like Paul, were ready to stand and withstand in defense of the glorious gospel given to Paul by Christ himself. These rightly divided the divine truth of God's Word, and their only agenda was to magnify Christ Jesus. This is the good kind of preaching we want to be exposed to because, going back to what verse 9 said, we want to abound more and more in love.

Defense of the gospel

We defend the gospel today simply by preaching it and not compromising it.

VERSE 18

What then? notwithstanding, every way, whether in pretence, or in truth, Christ is preached; and I therein do rejoice, yea, and will rejoice.

Whether in pretence or in truth, Christ is preached

Regardless of the motives, Christ was being preached. Many are preaching Christ without the right attitude, and they are not preaching anything but contention. However, to the degree they are preaching Christ we should pray for them and support them. Because they are preaching this way there is no reward for them. If they are preaching for money, fame, applause, or whatever, this is the only reward they will have. We are to pray for them that the message of Christ will go forth, and not speak ill of them, or tear them down.

However Christ is preached, I rejoice

Rejoice in any way Christ is preached, and not be robbed of the rejoicing. Paul knew some of the preachers were against him, and were even trying to rub salt in his wounds. Paul was not bitter against them, because he was constrained by Christ, and he knew the gospel was going forth. Paul was happy to suffer for the furtherance of the gospel. The power of Christ was resting in him so much that the Holy Spirit was writing the joy book of the Bible through that old sweet man named Paul.

VERSE 19

For I know that this shall turn to my salvation through your prayer, and the supply of the Spirit of Jesus Christ,

I know

Paul didn't wonder about being delivered, he knew he would be delivered. God will deliver us from the trials and tribulations over and over again, until such a time as He calls us home. We are not finished until God says we are finished, and that is because the same love of Christ that constrained Paul will constrain us too.

This shall turn to my salvation

- 1) Through prayers.
- 2) The supply of the Spirit of Christ Jesus.

Paul knew he would be delivered because of these two factors. Paul was delivered for a time before he was imprisoned again. Then finally Paul was fully delivered, and taken to glory when he was beheaded.

VERSE 20

According to my earnest expectation and my hope, that in nothing I shall be ashamed, but that with all boldness, as always, so now also Christ shall be magnified in my body, whether it be by life or by death.

According to my earnest expectation

Paul didn't want to be ashamed for any of the perils and imprisonments he suffered, and he certainly was not ashamed of the gospel of Christ. Paul knew Christ's gospel was the power of God unto salvation to those who believe. That Christ should be magnified in the likes of you and me is grace upon grace. We should believe our precious Savior for everything. He is able for all of it. Those Philippian saints never backed off from anything pertaining to Christ. Instead they ran well and with joy toward the mark for the prize of God's high calling in Christ Jesus.

With all boldness

Paul already spoke the truth in love with boldness, because that was Paul's purpose, and this is how he expressed it to these race running saints. None of it was because of him, but everything was because of Christ. Paul wanted everyone to know that he wanted Christ magnified in spite of circumstances.

Magnified in my body

Paul wanted Christ magnified in him whether he was dead or alive. This is the attitude all of us running the race must have. The purpose of every gospel minister should be to magnify Christ above all else. Paul wanted Christ to be magnified in him first, and he wanted the very attributes of Christ magnified in his life.

VERSE 21

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

For me to live

What someone lives for says a lot about who they are. Set your affections on things above, not on things on this earth. (Colossians 3:2) What has us shouldn't be worldly things and glories that fade away. We should live for Christ and run the race to win Him. In life we have opportunities to win Him, and in death we can share in all His glory if we are willing to suffer with Him. Christ would be magnified in that living body of Paul, and this brings gain to Paul, as well as gain to Christ.

To die is gain

If we love the Lord, our death in these earthly bodies is our gain. If we leave our earthly body before Jesus comes, that death will remove that dark glass we look through now, and we'll be in His glorious presence forever. What a wonderful thing it will be to be ushered into the visible presence of Christ at the dawning of that everlasting day. When those of us who love Him think of this it takes our breath away. How blessed is that person who, when they consider the balance sheet of their life, can put death down as a gain.

2 Timothy 4:8

Henceforth there is laid up for me a crown of righteousness, which the Lord, the righteous judge, shall give me at that day: and not to me only, but unto all them also that love His appearing.

VERSE 22

But if I live in the flesh, this is the fruit of my labor: yet what I shall choose I wot not.

Live in the flesh

Paul is speaking about his fleshly body. The fruit of his labor is what is in verses 21 and 22, and that is to magnify Christ.

What I shall choose

Paul cast everything on the Lord, and he let the Lord put him exactly where he needed to be. Paul didn't know what to choose, he wanted to let the Lord have His way, and let Him make the choice. Christ always chooses the exact things we need in order for us to run the race well, and to win Him with a full joy.

VERSE 23

For I am in a strait betwixt two, having a desire to depart, and to be with Christ; which is far better.

Paul had a desire to depart and be with Christ, and that would have been much better than all the trials he endured here on earth. Paul knew there was nothing to be compared with being face to face with the glory of God. Christians need not fear the natural death, because to be absent from the body is to be present with the Lord. Precious in the sight of the Lord is the death of His saints.

VERSE 24

Nevertheless to abide in the flesh is more needful for you.

That love that gave Christ to the world, and the love that brought Him from glory to die on an awful cross, was the love that now constrained Paul to stay because the saints needed him. Paul was constrained with bridal love for the body. He wasn't concerned for himself, because his concern was for the saints who love and long for Christ's appearing. Because of the love of the Holy Spirit and the grace of God, Paul's heart had a deep love and a passion, and a great desire to see that body become the bride of Christ. The same love that gave us Jesus to die for our sins is the same love that was constraining Paul to stay for the growth and development of the bridal saints. Paul really wanted to be with Christ, but he realized how much these people he preached to still needed him. Paul is showing his true pastor's heart that he got from Jesus, and he was willing to continue to suffer so he could continue to preach to these people he dearly loved. Paul went through all his suffering for the benefit of the bridal saints.

VERSE 25

And having this confidence, I know that I shall abide and continue with you all for your furtherance and joy of faith;

Having the confidence

Paul's confidence was not in his ability, it was in the faithfulness of God; His Word, His grace, and His promises.

I shall abide and continue

Paul knew he would stay for their sakes. He loved them so much that he was willing to endure the suffering, because he could continue to preach Christ as Bridegroom to them.

For your furtherance

The word furtherance means 'to progress, to advance.' Paul stayed in order to be a benefit to them, and for their furtherance and joy of the faith. If we surrender our lives to Christ Jesus we will grow up in all things, because it is His desire for us to do this. Christ in us is the hope of glory, and God is after that maturity, and that inheritance in the saints. God has invested everything in us, and He wants a return on His investment.

VERSE 26

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

By Paul staying their rejoicing would be more abundant in Christ Jesus, and they would have more to rejoice about, because by Paul staying they would be brought more of the gospel. The ones who finish the race with a full joy are those who will rejoice abundantly.

VERSE 27

Only let your conversation be as it becometh the gospel of Christ; that whether I come and see you, or else be absent, I may hear of your affairs, that ye stand fast in one spirit, with one mind striving together for the faith of the gospel.

Your conversation

Let your conversation, or in other words your 'manner of life', be in accordance with the scripture.

As it becometh the gospel of Christ

This means in a manner that is worthy of the gospel of Christ. Christ has given us His very life, and that is who lives in us, and this is why God cares for us. God wants all His children to run the race to win Christ as Bridegroom. The bride is the goodly pearl, and the highest treasure to God.

Whether I come or be absent

Whether Paul was with them or absent from them, he wanted to know that they were standing in one spirit and one mind, and striving together for the gospel. Paul wanted to see them in unity with no division among them. This is Paul being like a sergeant at arms, commanding them to stay awake, alert, and lovingly watching for the coming Bridegroom, Jesus Christ.

Stand fast in one spirit and one mind

We stand fast, especially in those places addressed to those who truly want to be separated unto God, the ones who go outside the camp to become those fully purposed saints to win Christ. Standing fast means 'not to waver, or not to be tossed to and fro,' but to keep their eyes on the prize of God's high calling in Christ Jesus. The love of Christ does all this. Being of one mind is having the mind of Christ, which is the Word of God.

Surrendering is totally committing to the will of God. This shows confidence and trust that His Word is true, and His promises are yea and amen. To live the life God wants us to live we have to be empowered by the Holy Spirit. Everything is in Christ the Vine, and we are the branches, and as branches we can do nothing but receive all He, our Vine, wants us to have.

Faith in the gospel

This is the encouragement to believe everything of the gospel. It is absolutely essential that we believe the Word of God in its entirety, because it is all profitable to us.

Hebrews 2:1

Therefore we ought to give the more earnest heed to the things which we have heard, lest at any time we should let them slip.

Striving together

This means 'seeking it out, the quest.' We need to keep the things of God in remembrance at all times. Only with His mind and His power can we believe the Word of God. It is already there for us. We need to let it reign in us.

VERSE 28

And in nothing terrified by your adversaries: which is to them an evident token of perdition, but to you of salvation, and that of God.

In nothing terrified

Deuteronomy 20:1-8 tells us that not having fear as far as the enemy is concerned was the first and last commandment of warfare. Those going into battle shouldn't be afraid of their enemies. Fear and faith do not weld together. When a person fears it shows he does not have confidence and faith in the Lord. We will have fears, but we cannot be dominated and controlled by fear. We keep our eyes on the Lord, because He is the God of our battles, and the battle is the Lord's. When we believe God, Satan has no quarrel because he can't fight against the shield of faith. There is nothing the devil has that can combat that shield, because God is much stronger than the devil, or anything else that comes against us.

Your adversaries

These are the grievous wolves, the satanic forces found in the book of Ephesians.

Ephesians 6:12

For we wrestle not against flesh and blood, but against principalities, against powers, against the rulers of the darkness of this world, against spiritual wickedness in high places.

Those who take their place in the heavenlies will have adversaries. The watered-down truth is everywhere, and the compromise of the gospel is rampant. These adversaries are not flesh and blood, but rather satanic forces behind spiritual wickedness.

Your salvation

This is not salvation from our sins, but in this case salvation means 'deliverance from our enemies.' God delivers us time and time again from the oppression and the onslaught of our adversaries.

VERSE 29

For unto you it is given on the behalf of Christ, not only to believe on Him, but also to suffer for His sake;

Trials are a gift to us, because if we are willing to suffer with Christ, we will reign with Him and be glorified together with Him. We need to know that fiery trials are not strange, but rather realize this is the normal course, especially for those running on the racecourse.

2 Timothy 3:12

Yea, and all that will live godly in Christ Jesus shall suffer persecution.

It is not given to us to believe only, but to suffer for His sake. The world teaches a 'prosper and be in health' doctrine, but the privileged children of God are those who are willing to suffer, and bear the marks of the Lord Jesus Christ. If we suffer with Him, we will also reign with Him, but He will have to deny us the right to rule and reign with Him if we are not willing to suffer for His sake. Sometimes the trials seem to last a long time, but this is done so that we will rise above them and get the victory over them. The two things found in the Smyrna and Philadelphia churches are love and suffering. Those lives that are a picnic never realize or know the deeper joys and the treasures of deeply fellowshiping with Christ.

VERSE 30

Having the same conflict which ye saw in me, and now hear to be in me.

Christ suffered, Paul suffered, and if we go the same route we will also suffer the same conflict. Same conflict means 'battles.' This is no accident, and these trials we go through are gifts given unto us. The word 'given' means 'due benevolence.' Those trials are wedding gifts, Christ's gifts to His bride so she may be glorified together with Him. He wants her to be that pierced side that was with Him on the cross, that rib portion. We need to submit and be ready, because He is coming soon. The Holy Spirit will finish, furnish, complete, and present Christ's bride to Him.

CHAPTER 2

Paul continues to speak to those high calling saints. In this chapter we see Christ as the foundation of life, and we see the roots of Christian living. He is everything. In the book of Ephesians we are in Him, but in Philippians, He is in us.

Verses 1-4 show the unity we have been made in Christ. We are His body, and we see the encouragement to one mindedness that is absolutely necessary for the unity of the Spirit. The things in verses 1 and 2 are things that can't be apprehended by us. However we could maybe apprehend some of the bad things in verses 3 and 4.

VERSE 1

If there be therefore any consolation in Christ, if any comfort of love, if any fellowship of the Spirit, if any bowels and mercies,

If there be therefore

'Therefore' shows that Paul is pointing back to chapter 1 as the incentive of what he is about to write now.

Any consolation in Christ

A consolation is an entreaty, which is calling to us in Christ. We have been blessed with all spiritual blessings in Christ Jesus, and this means Christ lives in us. All the potential, the yielding, surrendering, and receiving the full power of God is all there, and this is because of the life of Christ that comes through faith and faith comes by hearing, and hearing by the Word of God. Believing in Christ we know that through Christ we can do all things because His grace strengthens us.

Any bowels and mercies

This is tender mercies and compassion. When we have these there will go out from us compassion for those who are needy, sick, broken and frail. The Pharisees rejected Jesus, but He made friends with the sinners who truly needed Him. Jesus is the champion to all who love Him, especially those the world rejects and deems unlovable. When the world rejects us, Jesus is extremely delighted to take us in. God help us to always need Christ.

Any comfort of love

This is a marvelous comfort because it puts our hearts at ease, and we know everything will work for our good. So when we have tasted and found that the Lord is good, there will be a constraining love that will spring up in our hearts, and we will have a desire to do good and to overcome evil with good.

VERSE 2

Fulfill ye my joy, that ye be like-minded, having the same love, being of one accord, of one mind.

Fulfill ye my joy

The word fulfill means 'fill up.' Paul knew a joy that was unspeakable and full of glory, and he knew that only the Lord can give such a joy. We all have a joy channel that only the Lord can fill, and there are other joy channels which saints of like precious faith can fill.

Philippians 1:3

I thank my God upon every remembrance of you,

These Philippian saints were Paul's joy, because their fellowship was in, and continued in, the gospel of Christ Jesus, and because they never got off track. This is our joy too. The unity we have is in Christ Jesus, and the joy we have is in loving Him, and loving one another.

Be like minded

In Christ we are all one, and there is no difference. The first requirement to having this unity has to begin with unity between the Lord and each of us individually. When we have unity with Him, then and only then can true unity be achieved. We are in this together because we are in His body, compacted and tightly fit together.

When we allow Christ's mind to completely take over in us we supply others with truth and grace. Paul is laying out the evidence, the truth, and the result of letting the mind of Christ rule in us. The evidence of that is going to be harmony, like the most beautiful symphony we'll ever hear, and it will be because the perfect love of God will reign. We need to let the mind of Christ take control of our minds and reign in us, so that we are like minded, having the same love, being of one accord, and being of one mind. The mind of Christ is where all victory, all peace, all rest, and all unity lie.

This is also like minded with Paul's suffering in chapter 1, verses 29 and 30. Paul realizes that any suffering or anything we go through has to be on the basis of divine love. This is why Jesus suffered, and all the prophets down through the ages. They suffered because of the deep love and respect they had for God.

VERSE 3

Let nothing be done through strife or vainglory; but in lowliness of mind let each esteem other better than themselves.

Strife

The word strife means 'friction.' Paul wrote of strife because so much is done from this point of view. Everything we do must go forth from the standpoint of divine love. Anything contrary to the Bible is strife. Another meaning of strife is 'to put oneself forward.' This means to put our values, and feelings, and our satisfaction before our fellowship in the gospel. A little leaven

leavens the whole lump, sin begets sin, and a little legality continues to grow. One step away from the truth, and not standing for the things of Christ multiplies. Hold fast to which thou hast that no man take thy crown.

Vainglory

Strife and vainglory are the primary tools the devil uses to divide us. How tragic to desire man's applause more than wanting to please God. How tragic also to seek for ourselves that glory that only belongs to God. Those who do this will ultimately be defeated. Usurpers of Christ's headship over the church are but a transient sovereignty, and that headship will be as brief as it will be empty.

Luke 16:15

And He said unto them, Ye are they that justify yourselves before men: but God knoweth your hearts, for that which is highly esteemed among men is an abomination in the sight of God.

Lowliness of mind

We can't have a haughty, self-minded spirit and please God. Christ had a lowly mind, and that lowly mind sought nothing for himself but everything for us. That lowly mind of Christ caused Him to give up all the glory and riches of heaven and to go to the cross to die so that we could live. If Christ has a lowly mind then we certainly should have one.

Each esteems others better than themselves

We need to put aside what we want and be about the needs of others. We should be humble, and not asserting ourselves over another, and claim a great and mighty place. We need to learn to love and respect others above ourselves.

1 Peter 5:5-6

5) Ye younger submit yourselves unto the elder. Yea, all of you be subject to one another, and be clothed with humility: for God resisteth the proud and giveth grace to the humble.

6) Humble yourselves therefore under the mighty hand of God, that He may exalt you in due time.

We shouldn't ever think ourselves better than others, but rather apprehend humility, and never forget that we are nothing outside of Christ.

VERSE 4

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

We should not see only our own affairs, but learn to see things from other people's point of view. There must be no room for rivalry and personal vanity among God's people. We learn to look to other's interests and not just our own.

VERSE 5

Let this mind be in you, which was also in Christ Jesus:

This is the mind of Christ that is talked about in verse 4. We know what Christ is and who He is because of His great love for us. He encourages us to let His mind, and the attitude of His complete humility reign in us. Having the lowliness of His mind is the very opposite of the spirit of haughtiness and pride. If we have the mind of Christ in us we won't have any problems being humble. God will bring conditions and circumstances to us, but we have to humble ourselves.

We are the sons of God through Christ, and He wants us to grow up in Him in all things. The surrendering and the completeness of the Word of God should be in us, because Christ lives in us. This is a call to His very best. We can be everything He wants us to be, and that is all pleasing to our heavenly Father, so much so that we even grow into the true worshipper; the bride. If the mind of Christ does reign in us we will follow Paul as he followed Christ, and at the end of our lives we too will be able to say, "I am ready to be offered."

When we meditate on the gospel in the mind of Christ, there is no opportunity for the little foxes to come around and invade. However, if we give over to our own thoughts the little foxes can come in and wreak havoc.

VERSE 6

Who, being in the form of God, thought it not robbery to be equal with God;

Before the foundation of the worlds, and before Christ was conceived in the womb of the virgin Mary, He was in heaven with the Father, and He was in the form of God. He was very God of very God, and had equal status with the Father. Christ didn't rob God of anything, or take anything away from Him to say He was equal. Christ had everything with God, and He chose to leave it all for our sakes.

VERSE 7

But made himself of no reputation, and took upon Him the form of a servant, and was made in the likeness of men:

There are seven downward steps Christ took when He became a human. These seven downward steps express the very mind of Christ who esteemed others better than himself. We esteem others by showing them kindness, mercy, and forgiveness, because this is the way Jesus acts.

1) He made himself of no reputation.

In His complete obedience to the Father, Christ stripped himself of the glory, the authority, and the fellowship of His Father to come to the earth. He came as a man and not as God, because if He was to die for man, He had to be a man.

2) He took on the form of a servant.

Servant means 'to serve,' and He came to serve man. He gave up His royal robes

to come to earth to die that we may live. He sacrificed majesty and dignity to become lowly and poor so that we may be eternally rich.

2 Corinthians 8:9

For ye know the grace of our Lord Jesus Christ, that though He was rich, yet for your sakes He became poor, that ye through His poverty might be rich.

He left eternal riches and was rejected by His own. He became the worm on the cross to save all those who would believe Him. Very God of very God surrendered all because of the great love wherewith He loved us. Christ was a servant to the perfect will of the Father, and in doing that, many sons will be brought to glory. He was the poorest of the poor, but rich in grace and mercy.

3) Made in the likeness of men.

He didn't come to earth to serve angels. He came down lower than the angels, but only for a little while. Another reason Jesus came as a man was to understand all the things concerning man. Christ may have lost the equality with the Father, but He is still God. After the thousand year Millennial reign, He will turn the kingdom back to the Father so that the Father will be all in all.

VERSE 8

And being found in fashion as a man, He humbled himself, and became obedient unto death, even the death of the cross.

4) Found in fashion as a man.

Isaiah 53 tells us Jesus didn't have any physical beauty that we would be drawn to Him or that we would desire Him because of it. God wants us to learn to love Him for what He is on the inside, and for what He does, and not how He looks. The beauty of Christ can only be known as we learn of Him, and learn to praise Him for who and what He is to us. The true picture of Jesus Christ will only be revealed through the Word of God.

5) He humbled himself.

Everything about His life on earth was humble, and it started with His birth in a stable. God chose a very humble path for our Lord, but the path God chose was the necessary path. Jesus wasn't born with a gold spoon in His mouth, and if anything was in His mouth when He was born, it was probably straw. Christ was the poorest of the poor, and when He was dedicated to God His parents could only offer the very least that could be offered: two pigeons. Christ lived in poverty and humbly. He was tested and tried so that He could be sympathetic, be touched with our infirmities, and therefore give us comfort.

6) He became obedient.

First He was obedient to His heavenly Father, and then to His parents. He was obedient to laws. He learned obedience by the things He suffered, and He was willing even to give up His life for the sake of mankind. Jesus was obedient to God throughout His life on earth, all the way up to the very minute He finished it all for us.

7) Jesus became obedient to the death on the cross.

On the cross He won the victory for us by His death. Jesus became obedient to die as a common criminal. The death by crucifixion was reserved for the most hardened criminals. He knew before He let them capture Him what horrors awaited Him, but the peace of God sustained Him. He suffered all of it for us, and who could ever measure the distance between equal to God and the horrible death on the cross? He did this voluntarily, and because of His deep never ending love for us. He certainly deserves our eternal love, devotion, and praise.

This is the mind that was in Christ, and this is the mind that God wants to be in us. We have to give ourselves up to the will of the Father in order to accomplish what He wants to accomplish in our lives. God may ask us to take wrong done to us to the point of being walked on. Jesus took a lot of cruelty and punishment for our sakes, and He ended up on the cross. He bore all of that agony and never condemned anyone for the cruelty inflicted on Him. Instead of condemning, He prayed that God our Father would forgive those who were causing His pain.

VERSE 9

Wherefore God also hath highly exalted Him, and given Him a name which is above every name.

Christ took seven downward steps, and now we will see the seven upward steps concerning Him.

1) God highly exalted Christ: part 1.

This means that because Christ was willing to take the seven downward steps God highly exalted Him. This step is divided into 2 parts, and the first part is found in Acts 24, and this is where God raised Him up by the Power of the Holy Spirit.

Acts 2:24

Whom God hath raised up, having loosed the pains of death: because it was not possible that He should be holden of it.

2) God highly exalted Christ: part 2.

The second part of this high exaltation is found in Ephesians, and this concerns Christ sitting on the right hand of God, and shows the great power of God.

Ephesians 1:20

Which He wrought in Christ when He raised Him from the dead, and set Him at His own right hand in the heavenly places.

3) Given Him a name above every name.

All things done by believers will be done in the name of Jesus. The name of Jesus is all powerful.

Mark 16:17

And these signs shall follow them that believe; In My name shall they cast out devils; they shall speak with new tongues.

4) Which is above every name.

The name of Christ Jesus prevails above all else. There is no other name that has the universal knowledge of man as the name of Jesus does. Not all men accept it, but the name of Jesus is still universal.

VERSE 10

That at the name of Jesus every knee should bow, of things in heaven, and things in earth, and things under the earth;

5) At the name of Jesus every knee shall bow.

Those of us who believe Him bow willingly and adoringly. There is a day coming that all men, at His name, will bow whether they want to or not. This is far reaching and it includes absolutely everyone. No one will escape bowing at the name of Jesus and recognizing His divine authority.

VERSE 11

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

6) That every tongue should confess.

This will happen willingly or by mandate, but one day every tongue will confess Jesus Christ.

7) That Jesus is Lord.

His total name is Lord Jesus Christ, and what a beautiful name it is. He is the Lord anointed, the Lord over all, He is Jesus the man, and He is God's anointed Christ. He is our everything. His name deserves all praise and all glory.

To the glory of God the Father

The Father is glorified by Jesus' work of redemption, and many sons will be brought to glory because He obeyed the Father. God's children are His inheritance.

VERSE 12

Wherefore, my beloved, as ye 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.

Wherefore

This points back to Christ's condescension, and His exaltation, and it means the same things in our lives: our death with Christ, going down in death, and being raised to newness of life. Paul used this as a way to accomplish the things he is talking about in the following verses. It is only as we take our place in the death, burial, and resurrection of Christ that we are able to accomplish the things Paul is talking about in this verse and in the next few verses. These verses do not preach a gospel of works.

Galatians 2:20

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

As ye have always obeyed

God's people can be ornery sometimes, and maybe a little feisty, but they obey the truth of God's Word. This special Philippian company is allowing the Word to work effectually in them. They are entering into that tightly compacted and wonderfully knit body of Christ. These are the saints of the high calling of God in Christ Jesus, and they are joyfully and willingly suffering together with Him. They kept the Word of God in remembrance, and they never took their eyes off the blood.

Work out

Work out means 'let it happen, let it be performed.' Paul is actually saying to let your own deliverance be performed, and this is our deliverance from everything to become a full overcomer in Christ. Work out means to let what we are in Christ be manifested outwardly in our lives, and this is not something we can do without Christ. This is the deliverance that will allow us to hear the first trumpet blast calling Christ's bride to His side just before He takes the throne to rule as almighty God during the thousand-year Millennial Age. Having the great privilege to be a part of this wonderful event is a complete salvation.

With fear

The word fear in this verse means 'reverence to one's husband; awe.' To let perfect salvation be performed in our lives begins with reverence to the husband, Christ Jesus. Fear, or awe of the Lord, is actually our submission to Him. Fear of the Lord is giving Him complete rule and authority in our lives. This is how we work out our own salvation. The bridal company is in awe of the fact that Jesus loves us so much. We love Him because He first loved us. Getting ready for this wonderful bride could never be performed by us, but it can be performed in us by God's grace. Apart from God's grace we are helpless to accomplish any of it.

Trembling

The word trembling means 'one who mistrusts his own ability completely.' We should not have confidence in man, and that includes ourselves. We should put our confidence in Christ, and Christ alone. As a final note on this verse of working out our own salvation, we are to tend our own garden, and not try to tend someone else's garden. We need to let the Lord take care of our garden, and all the other gardens as well. He is much better at it than we are.

VERSE 13

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

Before anything can be worked out, God has to work it in. God works two things in us: to will and to do. Before a person can progress in the things of God he has to have the 'want to.'

Once the will (want to) is there, then it is 'to do.' The power God gives us will cause us to will and to do of His good pleasure in us. We are totally reliant on the husband, just as the body is totally reliant on the head. Everything comes from our head, Christ Jesus, and all we have to do is take from Him freely. Submitting to Him totally is absolutely essential for those in the race to obtain Him as Bridegroom.

VERSE 14

Do all things without murmurings and disputings:

Murmurings

This word murmurings means 'grumbling or muttering.' We find in the Old Testament that the grumbings are a result of one thing: unbelief. If we are to become the full over-comers God intends us to be, grumbling cannot be found in our lives.

Disputing

The word disputing means 'inward reasoning and opinions.' So many times we try to dispute things God is doing in our lives, but this should not be part of our walk. Rest assured that God is in control, and He always knows what He is doing in each of us. His way is always the best way.

VERSE 15

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

That ye may be blameless and harmless

We want to do things the way Christ did so that we may be the blameless and harmless sons of God. God wants us to do this for the sake of His work in us, and what he is accomplishing in us. What God has done in us by His grace is a real benefit in the process.

Without rebuke

Through the experiences God works in our lives is how we can be light in a dark and perverse world. The grace of God works in us and causes us to shine in this corrupt world. This work is from the inside out.

VERSE 16

Holding forth the Word of life; that I may rejoice in the day of Christ, that I have not run in vain, neither labored in vain.

Hold forth the Word of life

This is what we do when we shine in our lives. This doesn't just mean verbally, it means in action in every aspect of our lives. In reference to the bride, holding forth means 'to have and to hold.' These are wedding vows that are being spoken in the lives of those who truly want to win Christ as Bridegroom. To have and to hold the Word of eternal life is truly the saints in the body that are cherishing the crown, cherishing His name, and holding it fast. Christ is the first love, and these saints have not leave their first love. When the first trump sounds, and the

bride is caught away, it will then be too late to be a part of that glorious company, and the chances to be a part of that bride will be no more.

Rejoice in the day of Christ

The things of God are going to be the product of Paul's ministry, and Paul says he can rejoice in what God is doing as a result of his efforts toward them.

Run in vain

God is continuing to encourage brother Paul to preach, because this Philippian church is not just a church, but the glorious church without spot or wrinkle. She is altogether lovely because His love loves through her without dissimulation. Paul did not run in vain, and all his labors for the saints were not in vain. The church of Philadelphia is the church of brotherly love.

VERSE 17

Yea, and if I be offered upon the sacrifice and service of your faith, I joy, and rejoice with you all.

If I be offered

The word offered means 'poured forth.' This refers to the drink offering in the Old Testament in Exodus 29:40 and they just literally poured it out. The significance of this 'poured forth' is when a cup of water is poured out, the water doesn't offer any resistance, and it is completely poured out.

Upon the sacrifice and service of your faith

The word upon in this verse means 'with a purpose for.' Paul is saying if he be poured forth with a purpose for the service of their faith he wouldn't resist, because his suffering and sacrifice was for their growth. There are those today who suffer to give out the gospel message. Just like Paul, they realize it is for the building and growth of the saints.

VERSE 18

For the same cause also do ye joy, and rejoice with me.

This shows a mutual fellowship of the love of God when one gives out the Word, and another responds to it. This is a mutual fellowship as well as a mutual sharing of the same joy. Paul had a lot of joy and rejoicing with these Philippian saints.

VERSE 19

But I trust in the Lord Jesus to send Timotheus shortly unto you, that I also may be of good comfort, when I know your state.

Paul was sending Timothy to them because he wanted to know about their spiritual growth. Paul benefitted tremendously when he knew they were going on with the Lord, and yielding to Him. Their standing was perfect, but Paul wanted to know about their state.

VERSE 20

For I have no man likeminded, who will naturally care for your state.

Timothy was likeminded with Christ, and he sought the things of Christ. The mind of Christ is a humble mind that took Him down, down, down and down even lower than our level. He went beneath us. We can only do this if we have Christ's humble mind. We can only lift others up and encourage them if we are humble like Christ was. We can only achieve His mind through Him, because we are not capable of attaining anything without Him.

VERSE 21

For all seek their own, not the things which are Jesus Christ's.

This verse points back to verse 20 where Paul said there was no man like him who cared about their state. Everyone else attended to his own affairs, and didn't really care about the state of the saints.

VERSE 22

But ye know the proof of him, that, as a son with the father, he hath served with me in the gospel.

The proof of him

It is beautiful when we can stand the test of an exacting experience, and we can stand to prove God. God proved Timothy, and Timothy cared for the state of others. We should fellowship with others for the purpose of edifying one another. We have to know we can't ignore our brother's state and find our own. If we really find our own state, we find it in the things of Christ.

As a son with the father

Timothy was interested in the saints and their progress, and he had worked with Paul in the gospel. Paul thought of Timothy as a son.

VERSE 23

Him therefore I hope to send presently, so soon as I shall see how it will go with me.

Paul was unsure whether he would be released from prison or not, but he hoped he would be.

VERSE 24

But I trust in the Lord that I also myself shall come shortly.

VERSE 25

Yet I supposed it necessary to send to you Epaphroditus, my brother, and companion in labor, and fellowsoldier, but your messenger, and he that ministered to my wants.

Paul uses different parallels concerning those who work with him. Timothy was thought of as a son, but Epaphroditus is in the thought of a brother, a companion, a fellow laborer, and a fellow soldier. Being a fellow soldier shows that he went to battle and was right on the front lines with Paul. He was also the one who saw after the things Paul needed, and was a messenger to the saints.

VERSE 26

For he longed after you all, and was full of heaviness, because that ye had heard he had been sick.

The fact that Epaphroditus longed after them shows that he was a man of God. He was more interested in the saints than he was in himself. He was feeling bad for them because they were feeling bad for him. He didn't want to bring any burden to them.

VERSE 27

For indeed he was sick nigh unto death: but God had mercy on him; and not on him only, but on me also, lest I should have sorrow upon sorrow.

Paul is saying it would have been a tremendous loss to him personally if God had taken Epaphroditus because of his sickness. He was a faithful worker, a friend to Paul, and a great asset to the gospel of Christ.

VERSE 28

I sent him therefore the more carefully, that, when ye see him again, ye may rejoice, and that I may be the less sorrowful.

VERSE 29

Receive him therefore in the Lord with all gladness; and hold such in reputation:

We impoverish ourselves when we withhold the honor from someone that is honorable. A true servant such as Epaphroditus should be received in the Lord, and should be honored as such. But we must never forget who makes possible everything that servant does. To God be the glory always.

VERSE 30

Because for the work of Christ he was nigh unto death, not regarding his life, to supply your lack of service toward me.

He was nigh unto death

Epaphroditus was not sick because he had done something wrong, he was sick because of the work of Christ, and he was totally poured out for the gospel. Epaphroditus never got so close to the Lord as when he was nigh unto death. When we begin to suffer for the Lord Jesus Christ and the gospel, we can rejoice, because that is when we begin to apprehend the exceeding riches of God's grace.

Not regarding his life

This shows the same Spirit of Christ, and the same spirit of Paul. We can and must have the same spirit in our lives. Epaphroditus regarded not his own life for the furtherance of the gospel.

Your lack of service

The Philippian saints didn't lack desire to help Paul, they lacked opportunity. Epaphroditus was faithful to help, and he worked so hard that he fell ill because of it.

CHAPTER 3

VERSE 1

Finally, my brethren, rejoice in the Lord. To write the same things to you, to me indeed is not grievous, but for you it is safe.

Finally, my brethren

The word finally is not the end of it all, but rather it means that we have Christ as an example. Seeing Christ's life in Paul and Timothy and Epaphroditus shows it can be real in us as an example for others.

Rejoice in the Lord

If the Lord is all we have to rejoice in, what more do we need? The Lord is all that is really worth rejoicing in, because everything is in Him. Rejoicing in the Lord is really a springboard for what Paul is going to say in the rest of this verse. Paul says we simply must rejoice in the Lord, and certainly not rejoice in our own flesh.

This was a dire time for these Philippian saints, because there was so much hostility toward Christians. Paul himself was beaten, put in jail, and thrown out of Philippi. How could they rejoice under the circumstances they encountered every day? God puts us in exactly the circumstances He wants us in, and if we will live by His Word it will be easy to rejoice. We can do all things in Christ, and this includes rejoicing no matter what circumstance we face. Who we are in Christ comes out in the circumstances, and our growth also comes this way. God chose this way for us because He wants us to put our faith totally and solely in Him. Grace causes us to will and to do of His good pleasure. What a privilege we have to be in Him, and run the race to attain the prize of God's high calling in Christ Jesus. Rejoice in the Lord and be glad for His love, and for us who believe Him that is immeasurable and forever.

Write the same things to you

Whether he had written other things to them previously is not recorded in scripture. Paul is saying to write the same things, or as we would say 'harping on the same subject,' is not grievous to them, but it is safe. Paul wanted to safeguard something for them.

VERSE 2

Beware of dogs, beware of evil workers, beware of the concision.

Beware of dogs

The word beware means 'discern.' This is a warning about the unregenerate that are among us, as well as the carnal. The dogs can only mean the unsaved. The dogs emphasize the things of the flesh. We are not ignorant of the devil's devices, because we have Christ in us. The dogs are the manipulators of the truth, because they are religious dogs.

Psalms 22:16,20

16) For dogs have compassed me: the assembly of the wicked have enclosed me; they pierced my hands and my feet.

20) Deliver my soul from the sword; my darling from the power of the dog.

These verses in Psalms are referring to the religious leaders standing by the cross ready to bite and devour. The religious leaders act like sheep, but they are really dogs who have never had the experience of being born again.

2 Peter 2:21-22

21) For it had been better for them not to have known the way of righteousness, than, after they had known it, to turn from the holy commandment delivered unto them.

22) But it is happened unto them according to the true proverb, The dog is turned to his own vomit again; and the sow that was washed to her wallowing in the mire.

The evil workers

Again, these are religious workers that are evil and not born again. These evil workers are especially found among the Pharisees. The Holy Spirit is waving a big red flag here. We are to avoid those who are caught up in legality. Self-righteousness will hinder us like no other thing will. How tragic that some of God's people seek their own welfare and personal glory, and have no care or concern for others.

Those in Galatia were once faithful saints, but were drawn away from their walk in the truth, and turned to the flesh. They wanted the glory instead of giving God the glory. Self-righteousness and legality will defeat a fully-purposed Christian every time. Christ took the law out of the way by nailing it to the cross, and ushered in grace instead. Grace and the law can never mesh. God's grace even opened up our hearts to receive all He has to give us.

Concision

The word concision means 'to mutilate.' This is an outward extremist, and an outward show of pity. This is a cheap counterfeit to the true circumcision. There are some extremists today who are hard on their bodies, and they think they can cut and abuse themselves to be acceptable unto God. But not so.

VERSE 3

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

Concision is a counterfeit, but the opposite of it is circumcision. There are three earmarks of true circumcision:

1) We worship God in the spirit.

This circumcision is of the heart, and not seen outwardly. Jesus told the woman at the well to worship God in spirit and in truth. Those who worship in spirit and in truth are the true worshippers, and are the circumcision.

2) Rejoice in Christ.

Christ's life in us is what worships the Father in spirit and in truth. Everything is in Christ, and those who know that find His rest and peace. The true circumcision worship Christ, not what they have accomplished, not the law, and not in self-righteousness.

3) Have no confidence in the flesh.

We put our confidence in Christ, and not in corruptible flesh. These Philippian saints learned that flesh, and even religious flesh, will let them down. We can't put confidence in the religiousness of men, but we can trust Jesus. It doesn't matter who or what in this life is against us, or persecuting us, because we rest in the arms of Jesus knowing He will never leave us or forsake us. He will always love us and care for us.

VERSE 4

Though I might also have confidence in the flesh. If any other man thinketh he hath whereof he might trust in the flesh, I more:

Paul revisits his past in the next verses in remembrance of his past deeds, and his past accomplishments, etc. He is starting to describe that confidence in the flesh he is talking about. It may be a little different for us than it was for Paul, but we will find some similarities if we begin to consider these things. We need to realize our self-worth is zero apart from Christ. It is Christ in us that is the hope of glory.

VERSE 5

Circumcised the eighth day, of the stock of Israel, of the tribe of Benjamin, an Hebrew of the Hebrews, as touching the law, a Pharisee;

In verses 5 and 6 Paul lists in seven ways what it means to have confidence in the flesh:

1) Circumcised the eighth day.

The Jews gloried in this because they were the circumcision, and they contrasted themselves

with the uncircumcised heathen, the Gentiles. In the book of Romans we read what is a real circumcision and what is not.

Romans 2:28-29

28) For he is not a Jew, which is one outwardly; neither is that circumcision, which is outward in the flesh:

29) But he is a Jew, which is one inwardly; and circumcision is that of the heart, in the spirit, and not in the letter (law); whose praise is not of men, but of God.

2) The stock of Israel.

When Paul was Saul of Tarsus he gloried in this, just as the Jews glory in it still today.

3) Of the tribe of Benjamin.

There were 12 tribes of Israel, 10 tribes split one way, and the other two were known as Judah and little Benjamin. The 10 tribes became known as Samaritans, because their capitol city was Samaria. They were eventually captured by the Assyrians. After the 70-year captivity in Babylon, the history of Judah and Benjamin resumed, but not so with the 10 tribes. There was much prejudice between the tribes of Judah and Benjamin and the Samaritans. Paul is of the tribe of Benjamin, still pure and true. Benjamin stayed true when all others forsook the realm.

4) An Hebrew of the Hebrews.

This type of Hebrew was the elite of the elite, and they were extremely proud of it.

5) Touching the law, a Pharisee.

To attain the status of a Pharisee was the greatest aspiration at that time, and they were separated unto flesh. No one could find anything wrong with Saul as far as the law, because he was a keeper of the law to the letter.

VERSE 6

Concerning zeal, persecuting the church; touching the righteousness which is in the law, blameless.

6) Concerning zeal.

Paul was zealous in persecuting the church when he was Saul of Tarsus, and he didn't see it as a detriment. He actually thought he was doing God a service by persecuting the church.

John 16:2

They shall put you out of the synagogue; yea, the time cometh, that whosoever killeth you will think that he doeth God service.

7) Touching the righteousness which is in law, blameless.

Not many people could say that, but Saul of Tarsus could. These Pharisees, like Saul, would thank God they were not like the heathens and the publicans. (Luke 18:11.)

These seven points that Paul lists in the flesh have their counterparts in the spiritual sense, and these are things God can, and will, work in us. The things Paul had in the natural had a beautiful application in the spiritual.

1) Circumcised on the eighth day.

This simply means we are a new creation in Christ. Herein lies the true circumcision. The new creation is always identified with the eighth day as far as God is concerned. The number 8 represents the bride of Christ.

2) Stock of Israel.

God's chosen people, and God has chosen us in Christ before the world began.

3) Of the tribe of Benjamin.

The name Benjamin means 'the son of my right hand.' The tribe of Benjamin was a token of God, they were the elite, so to speak. They had a tremendous heritage as far as God was concerned, as do those who are in Christ as His bride.

4) Hebrew of Hebrews.

Abraham was called a Hebrew, and he knew how to sojourn in this world. He was just passing through this world looking for a city whose builder and maker was God.

5) As touching the law, a Pharisee.

The Pharisee was the fleshly separation, but God intends us to be separated unto Him, and this is the true separation. The Pharisee is only a counterfeit to the real separation God intended.

6) Concerning zeal.

Paul was zealous about persecuting the church, but we have a special zeal that is set on fire for the things of the Lord.

7) Touching the righteousness which is the law.

The righteousness God gives to us is not of the law, but rather it is in Christ Jesus by grace.

VERSE 7

But what things were gain to me, those I counted loss for Christ.

What things were gain to me

This is what Paul says about the things of the flesh. Paul looked at all he had before Christ as being valuable, but after Christ saved him, he saw all of it as loss. All he had before Christ, he saw as a big zero.

Those I counted loss for Christ

The word count means 'to agree with what God says, or to agree with His thinking.' If we have things of the flesh we see as gain, and they are not in Christ, we must also count them as loss for Him. We may even suffer the loss of them. When God starts to separate us from those things we glorified in, it can be painful. God doesn't want us to glory in anything outside of our Lord Jesus Christ. We don't always know what is gain to us until God takes them away, and then we find out how much we are glorying in them.

The word loss means 'damages.' Paul saw everything as damages after Christ saved him. These damages can keep a Christian from soaring, and from winning the race for the prize. We are all

called out of these damages to go without the camp. Anything in our lives that could hinder us from attaining God's best is damage.

VERSE 8

Yea doubtless, and I count all things but loss for the excellency of the knowledge of Christ Jesus my Lord: for whom I have suffered the loss of all things, and do count them but dung, that I may win Christ.

I count all things but loss

Paul counts all things loss, and this shows he agrees with God, and it shows that he knows these losses are truly necessary losses.

Excellency of the knowledge of Christ

Paul was out to gain something through the loss. What he gained was the excellency of the knowledge of Christ Jesus our Lord. Excellency means 'far beyond anything we could imagine.' This is not just a general knowledge, it is a super excellent knowledge of Jesus. This knowledge is deeper, and more perfect, an enlarged knowledge of Christ. This knowledge of Christ cannot be known unless we are with Him, and learning more and more of Him. Paul counted everything he considered valuable before he knew Christ, as loss. Paul knew if he was trusting in himself, and if he had his eyes on his flesh, then that would mean he couldn't be trusting in Christ. The more we lose sight of ourselves, the more insight we gain into the excellency of Christ. The super excellent knowledge is beyond comprehension, except to learn of Him by growing up in Him in all things. He wants us to know Him intimately.

For whom I suffered the loss

This isn't speaking of losing all things physically, this is speaking of the heart and the spirit toward the Lord. It is God's desire that Christ completely take over, and make us like Him. Christ in us and us in Christ. First Paul counted all things loss, and now he is saying he suffered the loss. Paul not only agreed with God, but he also suffered the painful loss. When he was Saul, Paul was very high in the Jewish religion, and he had to suffer the loss of all that.

Giving up all things that God considers loss is not always an easy thing to do, but it is the only way to gain the excellency of the knowledge of Christ Jesus. Jesus made himself of no reputation, and we certainly are no better than Him. In light of gaining the excellency of the knowledge of Christ, Paul said what was loss to him was but dung, refuse that had to be thrown out. Paul is not just talking about salvation, he is talking about winning Christ as Bridegroom, the prize of God's high calling. Everyone in the church will not attain that high place. Some, not all, will gain the right to not only win Christ, but the right to rule and reign with Him, and also share in His glory.

VERSE 9

And be found in Him, not having mine own righteousness, which is of the law, but that which is through the faith of Christ, the righteousness which is of God by faith:

Be found in Him

Wasn't Paul already in Christ the moment he believed? Yes, but here Paul is talking about having Christ's righteousness. Many are saved, but not all let Christ make them a replica of himself, and they are not willing to endure suffering in order to win Him. Many saints live under the law, and not under grace. Christ took the law out of the way when He nailed it to His cross, and He replaced it with His wondrous grace. He died to give us that marvelous grace.

Mine own righteousness

'Mine own righteousness' will never take us outside the camp to the Bridegroom. 'Mine own righteousness' will keep us in the camp with others who have their own righteousness. The path leading outside the camp is the one that leads to the Bridegroom, our Lord Jesus Christ. We can win Him and be found in Him not having our own righteousness. Self-righteousness is an artificial and counterfeit manufactured garment designed and inspired by Satan. It can in no way compare to the lily grown among the thorns. Paul rejected that insufficient and filthy robe of 'mine own righteousness,' and by faith he put on the glistening, splendid, incorruptible garment of God's own sacrificial character. He departs his own efforts and becomes the perfect workmanship of God.

The law

All self-righteousness, in reality, proceeds from the law. If a person is self-righteous he got it from the law, because people trying to live by the law are engrossed in their own self-works, and this is one of the reason Paul is so against it. We need to realize we are saved by grace without the works of the law. Self-righteousness and self-works are as filthy rags to God.

Righteousness by faith

We are saved by faith, not the works of the law, lest any man should boast. The only way to attain that provisional righteousness is salvation by faith and by believing God.

VERSE 10

That I may know Him, and the power of His resurrection, and the fellowship of His suffering, being made conformable unto His death;

That I may know Him

Paul is not referring to knowing Christ as Savior, because he had known that for many years. He who wills to know will know, and it is through yielding to grace. Only grace can make us know Him.

The three things Paul says as far as how he wants to know Christ:

1) The power of His resurrection.

This is the power of the Holy Spirit, and Paul wanted to know that same power it took to raise Christ from the grave. Paul wanted to live by resurrection power, and at one point in 2 Corinthians chapter 12, he speaks of being raised from the dead. He was sustained by the resurrection power, and we must be also. The resurrection power gave Jesus victory over

principalities and powers, and it is the same power that gives us victory over the onslaught of evil and the power of Satan. We can't know Christ and that power unless we experience it. We have to literally feel that power in our bodies, beyond our own physical strength.

2) The fellowship of His suffering.

To know the power of His resurrection was to fellowship with Him in His suffering; the one demanded the other. Jesus had to have the power of the Holy Spirit to sustain Him when He was going through all the suffering, and when He offered himself to save mankind.

3) Being made conformable to His death.

This doesn't mean He always died. Compare this with 1 Corinthians 15:31-32; 2 Corinthians 1:5-10; 2 Corinthians 4:7-12. These scriptures give us some of the examples Paul uses of being made conformable unto Christ's death, and indeed experiencing the power of His resurrection.

VERSE 11

If by any means I might attain unto the resurrection of the dead.

If by any means I might attain

Paul is once again going way beyond salvation here. 'If by any means' is Paul saying he doesn't care what it takes. He had a conviction about this, and if we say this to the Lord we had better mean it, because the Lord will take us at our word. We have to want to win Christ at any cost, no matter what. If we are serious, a multitude of things will come our way. We need to be like the Philippian saints and hold fast our crown, and this is by any means that we might attain the prize of God's high calling in Christ Jesus. Those who hold fast their crowns will depart this earth when the first trump sounds, and they will become the sun glory saints who will share in Christ's glory.

Resurrection of the dead

This verse is referring to the earlier resurrection which lifts us out from among the dead. All the believers will be raised a thousand years before the wicked dead (Revelation 20:4-6.) None of the wicked dead will be raised until after the Millennial reign. What Paul is talking about concerning the early resurrection is that there will be a group of people who will come out of the grave before the righteous dead are raised. This is the meaning found in 1 Corinthians chapter 15, and it speaks of the fact that all the believers will be raised in their own order, or rank. Paul was adamant about being part of the earlier resurrection out from among the dead ones.

VERSE 12

Not as though I had already attained, either were already perfect; but I follow after, if that I may apprehend that for which also I am apprehended of Christ Jesus.

Not as though I had already attained

Was Paul hoping he was saved here? Absolutely not, because he knew he was saved, and that question had been settled on the road to Damascus when he encountered Christ Jesus. Paul is

saying he had not already attained God's high calling. What Paul was hoping for was much more than salvation. He wanted God's best.

Either were already perfect

The moment we become a child of the King, our sinless perfection is taken care of, and our sins are gone forever. The perfection Paul is talking about is growing up into a fully mature saint and becoming that readied wife. Jesus saw the joy before Him, and He went gladly to the cross for His bride.

I follow after

Follow means 'to press, or to pursue.' Paul wanted to apprehend the specific calling not all believers will hear. The moment a person is born again, or is filled with the Holy Spirit, does not mean he hears the call to win Christ. There is a testing time, and a period of overcoming, and a time of growing up, and all of a sudden God will ask, "Will you run?" "Will you go with me and come away?" Rise up my love, my fair one, and come away. (Song of Solomon 2:10)

That I may apprehend

Apprehend means 'to make one's own.' Paul had laid hold, and he followed after in order to apprehend that which he was apprehended of. God must quicken this call to our hearts before we even know there is a racecourse and a race to be won. Paul was not confident in his ability to apprehend God's best, but he was totally dependent on God to bring about his apprehending it. He wanted to apprehend Christ who was apprehending him.

VERSE 13

Brethren, I count not myself to have apprehended: but this one thing I do, forgetting those things which are behind, and reaching forth unto those things which are before.

I count not myself to have apprehended

Paul is saying here that he had not finished his course. In the book of Timothy he says he had finished his course, but at this point he had not. He didn't yet know if he had won the race to rule and reign with Christ. God help us to walk through the furnace. We should not count the fiery trials that beset us as strange, because they are necessary for us to apprehend our Lord Jesus as Bridegroom. Enduring the fervent heat produces fervent love and fervent faith. God wants us to grow into having it all in Christ. The before-ordained good works we should walk in are the path to the bridal glory, and both the Father and the Son wanted for us from before the foundation of the world.

Paul realizes his time on earth is just about to wrap up, and he also realizes he needs a little more time to fully ripen. A premature picking of the fruit would be a loss rather than a gain. Every dream, every aspiration, every effort Paul may have had were all fulfilled in winning Christ as his Bridegroom. We follow Paul because his one purpose was to win Christ and be clothed in the holy glory robes of Christ's righteousness for all eternity.

2 Corinthians 3:18

But we all, with open face, beholding as in a glass the glory of the Lord, are changed into the same image from glory to glory even as by the Spirit of the Lord.

Forgetting those things behind

Those things behind include the gains, failures, etc., in a person's life. Sometimes people kick themselves in the head for all the things they have done. The devil taunts us with deeds and thoughts of the past again and again. Without a doubt, the devil brought to Paul's memory the Christians he persecuted and killed - especially Stephen.

But Paul was able to forget those things behind, and we should too. Yesterday is gone. Paul had a lot of guilt in his past, but in time he was able to put it behind him. When we keep our eyes on the blood, those things in the past matter less and less until they are forgotten. God does all this by His grace.

Reaching forth

We can't reach forth until we forget those things which are behind. If we still have guilt from the past, we need to ask God to help us forget it, because guilt ties us to those past experiences. All weights must be put aside to reach forward. Paul found a release from past things, and he was reaching forth. When a horse sees the finish line he stretches forth his neck with all he has, and this is what is called winning by a nose. So Paul was reaching forth to those things which were before him. By Paul stating that he was reaching forth he was humbly saying that grace made Christ his one true love. Paul was full of this love, and Christ had increased so much in him that all the while he decreased, and he knew it was the work of the Lord that brought it all about. In the trials of life we should be still and know that He is God. Our call by grace is to endure hardness like good soldiers. We can do that because we want God to will and to do of His good pleasure in us.

VERSE 14

I press toward the mark for the prize of the high calling of God in Christ Jesus.

I press toward the mark

Press means 'to run swiftly, to pursue in a hostile manner.' Hostile is actually translated as 'a fervent manner.' The bride is fervent about winning Christ. The mark for the prize is the goal for the victor. Stretching forth is the same as pressing toward the mark. The final push to win the prize is poured out to cross the finish line.

The mark is the goal line. Many will run for the prize, but the only the ones who run with joy will be the winners, because the joy of the Lord is their strength. He will finish the good work He began in us if we let Him. The Lord is everything we need.

The prize

The prize of the high calling is of course Christ himself. Christ is the crown of life, that crown of righteousness, that special prize for the winners of the race.

High calling

The high calling is the upward calling. This upward calling has been put forth to the whole church, because the church is a heavenly body. All in the church are going to dwell on high in different ranks like the stars of heaven.

Again, the prize connected with this upward calling of God is the right to rule and reign with King Jesus himself. This calling has nothing to do with our works. It is according to God's purpose and grace.

2 Timothy 1:9

Who hath saved us, and called us with an holy calling, not according to our works, but according to His own purpose and grace, which was given us in Christ Jesus before the world began.

VERSE 15

Let us therefore, as many as be perfect, be thus minded: and if in anything ye be otherwise minded, God shall reveal even this unto you.

As many as be perfect

The word perfect shows that God is calling out to us to grow up and mature into the full measure and stature of Christ. Christ in us is the hope of glory. The Holy Spirit is the one who brings this growth and perfection into our lives. Paul is talking about that perfect heart, that perfect attitude that is wanting the very best that God has to offer and growing up in all things.

Be thus minded

'Be thus minded,' especially in verses 7-15, means to count all things loss in order to win Christ. They stretch forth to finish the race, and this is the 'thus minded' we should have. We need to have that mind of maturity, and the eyes of our understanding enlightened. God has brought us in to the wonderful truth of His high counsel, and we need to stay with it until the end of our lives. God is sufficient for everything we will need to reach that maturity in Christ Jesus. Whatever we suffer for Him down here on earth is not worthy to be compared to the glory that is ours in our beautiful Bridegroom.

God shall reveal

Paul knows who is keeping him, and who he can have confidence in. If our minds are not steadfast on the gospel of Christ Jesus that was given to Paul, we will miss the very best God has offered to us. God will point it out to us if we are otherwise minded. If we are not perfect minded, and have some of the things that keep us from being thus minded, God will reveal even this to us. We need to live the gospel of Christ and let it become vibrant in us. Rejoice in the Lord always. God will perform this good work in us as we yield to Him more and more. God is for us always.

VERSE 16

Nevertheless, whereto we have already attained, let us walk by the same rule, let us mind the same thing.

Whereto we have already attained

Compare this with Galatians 3:1-3. Paul is stating that if we have already walked in victory, not to give up the truth we have already learned. Don't go back on what God has revealed to us. Hold fast to what thou hast that no make take thy crown. Stand in the truth, and grow in it.

Let us walk

The specific word walk in this verse is only used five times in the New Testament, and five is the number of grace. This word walk means 'walking in the spirit, a prosperous walk, to march as a soldier, to walk in military rank.' This speaks of a very orderly and disciplined walk, not haphazardly, but adhering to the scripture.

By the same rule

Rule means 'a piece of rounded wood to which anything fastened to it is kept straight.' We are fastened to the cross of Christ, and grace keeps us straight. Let us walk by the same rule, and let us mind the same things. We ourselves can't stay straight and walk the walk, grace does it. The Lord puts us to the cross and we are crucified with Him. After that we don't live, it's Christ that lives in us. He wants us to rest at His feet as He works in us by His wonderful grace. We keep our eyes affixed on Him, and His wonderful grace message.

VERSE 17

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

Be followers together of me

This is to follow Paul as he followed Christ. We follow Paul because he has been blessed with knowing the high calling message of God in Christ Jesus. Paul's gospel not only opens up to us the mysteries of the types and shadows in the Old Testament, but in the book of Revelation as well.

Mark them which walk

The word walk here means 'to tread all around, to walk at large.' In other words they don't walk in a disciplined manner, they just amble around. The ones who do walk in a disciplined manner can set an example for them.

VERSE 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:

Many walk

Paul shed his tears over the saints who were just ambling, and he spent a lot of time praying for them. By his weeping we see he is speaking of Christians who are just strolling around. They don't have the disciplined and orderly walk they should have. He was grieved to see the saints start to fall away. It hurt him because he had the very heart of Christ.

Enemies of the cross

Are sinners the only enemies of the cross? No. An enemy of the cross is one that does not allow the provisions of the cross to work in their life. They are saved, but they don't enter in to all the wonderful provisions of God, such as the infilling of the Holy Spirit. It grieves God when saved people refuse to be filled with the Holy Spirit. Jesus died and rose to give forth the power of the Spirit, and it is the same for our growth in grace, and all of the perfection that was provided for us through the cross. All these are part of the wonderful result of Calvary. Those who don't embrace them are the enemies of the cross, denying its power.

VERSE 19

Whose end is destruction, whose God is their belly, and whose glory is in their shame, who mind earthly things.)

Whose end is destruction

This doesn't mean hell, this means wasted opportunity to apprehend all the provisions of God.

1 Corinthians 3:15

If any man's work shall be burned he shall suffer loss; but he himself shall be saved; yet so as by fire.

Whose God is their bellies

This means a man's own desires and not God's. There are Christians today who are walking after their own desires and after their own flesh. Their own desires are most important to them, and their minds are not on God's desires. We have to fight the good fight of faith, and above all not turn from grace, because if we do turn from grace we leave ourselves open to the wiles of the devil. We need to keep our eyes on God and not on circumstances, and to know there has to be grace in our lives always. The devil is the great tempter, and he knows his job, but God only allows him to do to us what God can use to help grow us up. The cross has made the way of escape from all the trials we encounter in our walk.

Whose glory is in their shame

Another reading of this is 'to their shame,' and it is because they are glorying in things of the flesh, not the things of God, or Christ Jesus. Glorying in themselves and the things of the flesh is indeed to their shame.

Who mind earthly things

Their minds are not set on heavenly things, much less the heavenly Christ. They will never win Him if they are minding earthly things. These people are looking for self-glory and some of the temporal things the world can offer them. They are called Christians, but are without Christian

love and grace. They have taken their eyes off the grace of God, and earthly things have become more important to them. They are of the earth, earthy, and their lives are without wings. They have no spiritual ideals or upward looking to the heavens.

Our citizenship is in heaven, and that is where our hearts should be also. We need to set our eyes on the things above, because the Bible calls earthly things 'beggarly elements of the world.' Christians weighted down with these beggarly elements will never be ready to take off at the first trump. We must be awake and watching when the Lord comes for His bride, and not be weighted down with corruptible crowns when we can have an incorruptible crown.

VERSE 20

For our conversation is in heaven; from whence also we look for the Savior, the Lord Jesus Christ:

Our conversation is in heaven

This is in contrast with verse 19. This means our manner of life is in heaven, unlike those Paul said their end was destruction. We are a heavenly people, and God expects and intends for us to act that way. Our citizenship is in heaven now, not someday. The word citizenship is where we get our word 'politics,' and that word means 'our way of life.' People who are tied to politics on this earth have that way of life, but our way of life should be tied to heaven. We actually belong to Christ, and we are seated with Him there now. Anyone born again is as good as there. We don't want to plant our roots too deep in this earth because we are just passing through.

We look for the Savior

We look for our Savior's coming in the air. As we begin to learn to love Him more and more, we not only look for Him, but we begin to long for His appearing, and those who are longing for His appearing will be the ones waiting and watching, and loving His appearing. These are the first trump saints, the bridal company.

VERSE 21

Who shall change our vile body, that it may be fashioned like unto His glorious body, according to the working whereby He is able even to subdue all things unto himself.

Change our vile body

Another translation for our vile body is, 'our body of humiliation.' This is the earthly habitation we have while we are on the earth. Our earthly bodies are so prone to faults – but in a moment, in the twinkling of an eye, God will change our mortal body to be like unto His glorious body for all eternity. This is faith made whole.

Glorious body in the Greek means 'the things belonging to Christ, the most glorious state.' The more of Christ we embrace, the more glory that will be revealed in us. Christ wants us to be the bride descending from heaven having the glory of God.

According to the working

This is all done in His ability and His keeping, so He wants us to cease from our own works and enter into the rest of God.

Able to subdue all things unto himself

Only God can glorify the body, and only God can change the spirit and the soul. We must believe God to change us spirit, soul, and body. All we need to do is yield to God's operation, and let Him do what He wants to do, even though it may be a very painful operation at various times in our lives. We need to let Him subdue us as He has subdued all things to Himself. Why should we wrestle with trying to get something He has already given us? It is the life of Jesus that gets it done, and it is that life that conquers every foe, and it is a fully supplied life of grace. The question that remains is how much are we going to let Him do? He is able for it all through His Word. Subdue all things means He has conquered us, His love has won us over. We get to the point where we say, "Lord I surrender." My beloved is mine, and His desire is toward me. (Song of Solomon 7:10)

CHAPTER 4

VERSE 1

Therefore, my brethren dearly beloved and longed for, my joy and crown, so stand fast in the Lord, my dearly beloved.

Therefore

This reaches back to all that has been written in this book up to this point. Because of all the things he has already told them, Paul is telling these saints to stand fast in the Lord.

My brethren

Paul doesn't just say brethren, he calls them 'my brethren.' Paul so loves the love of Christ he sees in these saints who love to run the race, and he loves them dearly. He loves them because of the love of God in himself, but he loves the love of Christ he sees in them. The sincerity of their love is what Paul is pointing to from his prison cell, and that prison cell is where he writes this joy book of Philippians.

Dearly beloved

This means 'my favorite; worthy of love.' Paul isn't preferring lives here, but he is preferring and coveting the fellowship of those who are, by grace, running for the prize of God's high calling. Paul loved their fellowship, and he knew they were worthy of love. Paul longed to be with them because they had ravished his heart, and this is because they had grown up in Christ. They were Paul's delight, because everything of truth he preached to them about truth in love, he saw in these saints. He really did have the utmost divine love for them. He was joined to them and he had a tremendous spirit for them, and they for him.

My joy and my crown

Paul shared their triumphs and it was his joy. The crown means 'the royal exalted rank.' This is a crown that will never fade away, and whose beauty and value will only increase in the ages to come. There is a rank in the high calling in Jesus, and there is a mark we reach toward, letting go of the things behind and pressing on to win the crown. We need to become mature saints by growing in grace and in the knowledge of Jesus Christ. This pleases the Father greatly. Crown also means 'the exalted reward of righteousness.'

2 Timothy 4:8

Henceforth there is laid up for me a crown of righteousness, which the Lord, the righteous judge, shall give me at that day: and not to me only, but unto all them also that love His appearing.

This crown of righteousness can belong to us if we want it, and if we are willing to suffer together with Jesus to reign together with Him. Those who win the crown are the ones loving Him and growing up in Him to become like Him in all things.

Stand fast in the Lord

Stand fast means 'keep that standing.' We stand, withstand, and having done all, we stand. We begin in the Lord, and we continue in the Lord, and we should finish in the Lord. The Lord is the one who does the keeping, and all we do is show up and believe His Word. We have a peace and a rest when we let go and let God do His perfect will in our lives. We need to pray that fervent fire and love will continue to burn in us. We pray that God will stoke that fervent fire to let it shine brighter. We have His life living in us, and that life is capable of all the yielding, and all the worship we will ever need.

Paul tells them to stand fast because the race is not finished for them. This is the same for us, because if we are drawing breath there is more race to run. Hold that fast which thou hast that no man take thy crown. This isn't the salvation that gets us into heaven, this is the salvation that places us on the throne ruling and reigning with our KING of KINGS and LORD of LORDS. This is a beautiful and complete salvation.

VERSE 2

I beseech Euodias, and beseech Syntyche, that they be of the same mind in the Lord.

Euodias and Syntyche

Euodias means 'sweet smell,' and represents our prayer life. The name Syntyche means 'well met; fortunate,' and represents the ministry and the needs met by the Word of God. Euodias had a ministry of prayer, and Syntyche had a ministry of ministering the Word. Both of these ministries come together in the book of Acts.

Acts 6:4

But we will give ourselves continually to prayer, and the ministering of the Word.

Both activities are vitally important, and we can't have one without the other. Women were essential to Paul's ministry in Philippi. There is tenderness in a woman that comes from grace. Godly women have always been used to the highest level of glory throughout the Word of God. After Lydia, a seller of purple, heard Paul preach and carried the Word back to Macedonia, the people of Macedonia begged Paul to come and preach to them.

Be of the same mind

This means to be in the same mind in the Lord. It also means not to think that any one ministry is greater than any other. Be of the same mind, in one goal, and of one purpose in the Lord. Let this mind be in you which is also in Christ Jesus. We should never let friendships supersede the fellowship in the gospel of Christ. When we get away from the gospel is when problems set in, our vision and purpose get distorted, and self righteousness steps on the scene. We want to have His mind, and win Him. It will definitely be worth it.

The devil is always at work trying to put divisions and strife among God's people. Who or what it was that brought this seed of discontent between these two women is not mentioned in God's Word. This is what shows that it is the Word of God. The devil brings the dirt of division, strife, separation, jealousy, backbiting, etc. All of these tend to divide God's people and get their eyes on the wrong thing. It's amazing how a small bit of dirt can give root to a weed, or to a spirit of division and estrangement from the things of God. When fellowship is broken, communication with God is blocked. We are to endeavor to keep the unity of the Spirit in the bond of peace, and this is absolutely essential if we want to attain God's best.

VERSE 3

And I entreat thee also, true yokefellow, help those women which labored with me in the gospel, with Clement also, and with other my fellowlaborers, whose names are in the book of life.

I entreat thee

Paul knows only a gracious approach can enable his fellow workers to bring the two women together in unity again. At Philippi there were those who would give their efforts to heal and to mend rather than to break. We need to be ambassadors of Christ's unity rather than the devil's plan to divide and conquer. We need to be peacemakers, not troublemakers.

True yokefellows

Paul mentions Clement, whose name means 'divine twig.' A little twig can supply and produce sweet fruit. The true yokefellows are the ones who truly are of the same mind that love the grace of God just as Paul did.

Help those women

Paul wanted the others to help these two women in order to endeavor to keep the unity of the Spirit. We need to realize we are children of the King, and little lords of all. We should shun bickering and realize that everything is about Christ in us, and never about us. This is why we

should get along and love and encourage one another. We should all seek the same mind of the Lord. The bickering just distracts us, so we leave that at the altar. Only wicked unbelief can keep us from all God has for us. God delights in watching His children grow up.

Labored with me in the gospel

There are some who put down women ministers, but throughout scripture God uses women mightily, often in times of spiritual declension.

Book of life

There were many others who labored with Paul whose names are in the book of life. This book is not just to show they are saved. There are rewards in this book of life.

VERSE 4

Rejoice in the Lord alway: and again I say, Rejoice.

There is much rejoicing in this letter to the Philippians. It is a letter of victory and rejoicing. There is suffering, heartache, tragedy, and many other such things, but these Philippian saints had the spirit of victory and rejoicing. Paul was in a filthy, stinky prison - in the very worst circumstances imaginable, humanly speaking. He had nothing to sustain him, or make him happy.

But in spite of all the dire circumstances he was in he sang like a mockingbird on a fair, dewy morning. He could do this because Christ constrained him, and his heart had joy unspeakable and was full of glory. The circumstances imprisoned his physical body, but his soul and spirit were soaring like an eagle with his Lord, his Bridegroom. Paul knew his suffering was the birth pangs of a coming glorious day, and he rejoiced in the suffering. He knew nothing could separate him from the love of God which is in Christ Jesus his Lord. Paul's heart was filled with joyful optimism, and out of its abundance he shouts to his readers, "Rejoice in the Lord, and again I say, Rejoice!!!" We should rejoice in what the Lord has done, and in His fully purposed plan that He will finish in us if we allow Him to do it.

VERSE 5

Let your moderation be known unto all men. The Lord is at hand.

Let your moderation be known

Moderation means 'yielding, forbearing, gentleness, unselfish, considerate.' It's an attitude toward others, and it is very important in these trying times we live in. Let your gentleness reign, and let all men see it. Don't be ashamed of it because it is the Lord who makes us tender, unselfish, considerate, etc. He wants us to be filled with all His fullness. When we begin to know how much He loves us, we rest in that marvelous love, and we are totally at peace. The believers whose spirit is clothed in this wonderful assurance of His love live above the circumstances, and are never harsh, uncaring, or morose to fellow Christians. We can't be harsh to a brother or sister and be what God wants us to be. Cold hearts are thoughtless, but a warm heart is thoughtful and generous. Spiritual joy springs from our relationship and the

wealth we have in Christ, and this gives us the power to understand our brothers and sisters. We should live a loving and joyful life in Christ because in Him we have everything.

The Lord is at hand

God knows what kind of days will be prevailing just prior to the coming of the Lord. We find throughout scripture that just before God did something great there were always horrible, horrible days. The days before Jesus came into the world were awful days, and that carried over to Herod killing innocent children trying to kill Jesus when he was a baby. Before Noah's flood there were terrible days and before Israel came out of Egypt there were terrible days. The day we live in is no different. In the time of the coming of the Lord, men are unreasonable, but God tells us to be reasonable and gentle.

Jesus is coming and it might be today. His bride is anticipating His appearing. Be ready for Him, be full of joy, and full of the Holy Spirit. He is so for us! We should be awake, watching, and longing for His appearing. The past is put behind, and He is our future. Christ in us, the hope of glory has our past, our present, and our future.

VERSE 6

Be careful for nothing; but in everything by prayer and supplication with thanksgiving let your requests be made known unto God.

Be careful for nothing

This means to not be anxious for anything.

Luke 10:41

And Jesus said, Martha, Martha, thou art careful and troubled about many things.

Martha was the one caught up in works and troubled, but her sister Mary sat at the feet of Jesus and became a worshipper. Mary had the better thing, because her confidence was in her Savior. She had peace and rest in Him, and she knew He was able for all things.

By prayers

The way to not be anxious is by prayer and supplication with thanksgiving, letting our requests be made known unto God. This is a sure cure for anxiety in any situation. There is nothing we can't take to God in prayer, and then believe Him for it. Prayer indicates worship, so it is not always asking for things. Prayers of worship are the incense of the saints.

Supplication with thanksgiving

Supplication means 'to cry out because of need.' When these prayers are delivered to God it usually means that person is under a very heavy burden. Thanksgiving means 'an act of faith.' This shows that we praise God before the answer even comes. We pray believing He cares about everything, that he is for us and more than able for every request. Nothing is hard for the Lord. Even if we pray not believing He still abides faithful. He is tender and loving, and He understands that we are not perfect.

God loves a broken heart and a contrite spirit. We need to trust God that His grace will cause us to pray according to His will. Praying in the most holy faith is to completely trust the Lord. We always pray in the name of Jesus, because if we don't pray in His most holy name our prayer will go no higher than our head. If we pray in His most holy name our prayer goes from our lips to His, and then to the ears of our heavenly Father. When we pray in the holy name of Jesus, we are in the presence of the Godhead.

VERSE 7

And the peace of God which passeth all understanding, shall keep your hearts and minds through Christ Jesus.

The peace of God

The peace of God comes to us only by the fellowship of prayer and worship. This verse is the result of the prayer of thanksgiving. The peace *of* God is different from peace *with* God. Peace with God is what we get when we are born again. After that we have made peace with God. The peace of God means exactly that, it is the peace that comes from God, the peace that takes away anxiety.

Keep your hearts and minds

Keep means 'to mount guard as a sentinel.' This puts us in a place of safety. The peace of God is what will keep our hearts and minds. This is a literal meaning because our minds can race and race. The peace of God keeps our hearts and minds through Jesus Christ. Christ is the keeper, and we are the prisoners of His deep, amazing love for us. The bride trusts in Him to keep her, and she completely trusts in His love for her. We need to be completely dependent on God, because peace and rest are ours when we completely trust Him.

VERSE 8

Finally, brethren, whatsoever things are true, whatsoever things are honest, whatsoever things are just, whatsoever things are pure, whatsoever things are lovely, whatsoever things are of good report; if there be any virtue, and if there be any praise, think on these things.

Finally

The word finally used in this verse is not a conclusion, but rather a completion, a going forward in the race to win God's best. We are one in Christ, and we need the mind of Christ.

There are six qualities listed in this verse that can only come about by the enabling of the Holy Spirit. The qualities listed in Galatians chapter 5 pertain to the outward testimony of the Holy Spirit's inner working in us while the six qualities listed in this verse pertain to the Spirit's intimate inner workings known between the Lamb and His wife. It's about the intent of the heart, and the Lord is absolutely concerned with the development and maturity in His wife. These six things came from the mind of Christ, and they all add up to God's peace:

1) Whatsoever things are true.

Paul isn't speaking of truth as it is used in a court of law, but of truth that is sweet, gentle, precious, and forgiving. This is truth in love. The truth itself isn't always beautiful, but to be true is always beautiful.

2) Whatsoever things are honest.

This means 'honorable and worthy of the greatest respect.' This word honorable suggests seemliness and dignity. There is a stateliness about this word that brings to mind Calvary and an empty tomb. It represents whatever makes our character resemble Christ.

3) Whatsoever things are just.

The things that are just are those things that represent God. To be just is to always act in those things which satisfy God. God is just, and He is the justifier of him who believes on His Son, Jesus Christ.

4) Whatsoever things are pure.

Pure is in the thought of stainless and unblemished. Those of us who are born again are pure, and because we are born of God we cannot sin. Christ died to make us free and pure. Our new man, under the power of the Holy Spirit and when the Word is in control, is pure enough to be Christ's bride.

5) Whatsoever things are lovely.

Lovely means 'amiable and loveable.' These are those whose faces show the love and tenderness of Christ.

6) Whatsoever is of good report.

We are to report good news because it edifies and enriches. Good news is gracious and winsome, and Christ gave His life for good news. Good news is telling others about Christ's ability to save them.

These are the things that should be occupying our minds, not the negative things in the world.

If there be any virtue and praise

Virtue means 'excellence or strength.' Virtue includes whatever is commendable. We are to mark and embrace those things that are commendable. We cultivate these things in our own minds, delight in them, and think on them. We should seek the lovely and beautiful things, and avoid those things that are out of harmony with God.

VERSE 9

Those things, which ye have both learned, and received, and heard, and seen in me, do: and the God of peace shall be with you.

Those things

The things we have learned, received, and heard, and seen in Paul, those things we do. Paul had all the things listed in verse 8. All those things must be learned, because we are not born thinking of all those things. There is a conditioning time in our lives where we literally have to bring every thought into obedience, and exercise our minds unto these things. There is no better way to do this than dwelling on scripture. In this verse Paul passes from saying to doing. This is the result of scriptural thinking. We can't do this until our thinking is right. The pattern

we put into the loom of our mind and soul will be the pattern that will work out in our life's tapestry. We need to be like Paul and never lose sight of our heavenly vision.

The things we think on in verse 8 are the intents of the heart and mind. When we see what we are apart from God, we realize these things can only come from the mind of Christ. When we think on these things, God, by His grace, is enabling us to desire to be transformed from this world. Only grace that does that. God gives us the desire, and he opens our hearts to receive it. He renews our minds, and makes them like His mind. This is the mind of the goodly pearl, the Lamb's wife.

The God of peace

In verse 7 we see the peace of God, and now we see the God of peace. The Holy Spirit is that God of peace.

VERSE 10

But I rejoice in the Lord greatly, that now at the last your care of me hath flourished again; wherein ye were also careful, but ye lacked opportunity.

I rejoiced

Paul was a rejoicer. He rejoiced in every single thing pertaining to the Lord. Paul didn't just preach the Word, he lived it. Paul had joy, upon joy, upon joy in this book of Philippians, and it was because of the Philippian saints. These were the saints he was going to be joined with to marry Christ Jesus someday. God's plan for a bride has nothing to do with anything we do, but everything is because of Christ in us. God wants us to become mature sons, because He wants to fellowship with His sons.

Your care of me flourished again

Evidently the people in the church at Philippi went through some trying financial times themselves. So much so that they couldn't see to Paul's physical needs, and they no doubt just didn't have it to give. In Corinthians we are told they even gave out of their poverty, but for a time they didn't even have that. Now Paul was rejoicing again because their hearts were made known to him by their care for him. He was joyful, but he was even more joyful for the blessing they received to their heavenly accounts because of their giving to meet his needs. As a matter of fact, Paul was rejoicing more for their blessing than he was for having had his needs met. It is the giving hearts that will be the high calling saints.

The opportunity

Paul knew they wanted to help him, but they lacked the opportunity to do so. These Philippian saints never forgot Paul's blessing to their lives. He had, at great cost, brought them the gospel. Paul was rejoicing, and deeply thankful to see the gospel at work in their lives.

VERSE 11

Not that I speak in respect of want: for I have learned, in whatsoever state I am, therewith to be content.

In respect of want

Paul wanted to make known he was willing to trust God for what he needed. He was always thrilled with their care, but he wanted them to realize he was yielding to God because of the grace of our Lord Jesus Christ. He wanted them to know he put his trust and confidence totally in God.

I have learned

Paul didn't speak because of want, because he had learned to do with very little or with much. This is something that must be learned, because we are not born content. Our learning is not going to be an overnight affair, because we grow and learn in the Lord just as a child in the natural grows and learns: line upon line and precept upon precept.

Whatsoever state I am in

This shows our state can fluctuate, but our standing never does. Our state can be hot or cold. It can be on the mountaintop or in the valley. Even though our state can change, our standing is forever in the Lord.

Content

Paul shows us that the secret of contentment lies in our fellowship with the Lord. The intimacy Paul had in the Lord brought him through some of the most trying times any man has ever faced. But Paul rejoiced in all of them. The most trying times of our lives reveal God's richest blessings. These are times when our circumstances are anything but conducive to rejoicing. This is experiencing the richness of the feast God can spread in the presence of our enemies, even though that feast is spread in the wilderness. We need to see the storm clouds as absolutely necessary to the ultimate harvest. If God be for us, the storm clouds can never be against us. So we gladly face the storms knowing that the ultimate prize is to rule and reign with Christ Jesus.

Paul could be content because he was on the Rock which is Christ Jesus. It didn't matter what state he was in because he learned to lean on Christ Jesus. He had a peace that passed all understanding because of his faith in the Lord. Paul had Christ, and Christ had Paul.

VERSE 12

I know both how to be abased, and I know how to abound: everywhere and in all things I am instructed both to be full and to be hungry, both to abound and to suffer need.

How to be abased, and how to abound

God allowed Paul to be abased on purpose, because to really know things we have to experience them. So Paul learned to be abased and how to abound. He had that necessary balance in his life.

I am instructed

Paul was instructed, which shows that there is a learning process. Instruction means 'instructed into the mysteries.' Instructed shows God has given us everything to succeed, and He prepares

us for everything we face. God would never drop us in the middle of the ocean and tell us to swim for it. He won't test us beyond what we can bear, because He loves us, and His grace is sufficient for everything. We walk in the before-ordained works that were ordained before a star was ever set in the sky.

God is all wisdom to us, and when we learn His Word we will also learn of His love for us. In knowing His love we transform into full overcoming saints in Christ. We just show up and let Him work His perfect will in our lives. If we let Him, He will make us His masterpiece. It doesn't matter what state we are in when He saves us. He is faithful in all things, and faithful to perform the good work in us to completion.

Hungry or full

In this Paul writes of his contentment in whatever state the Lord has him in. He knows how to be hungry and how to be full. He wants the Philippian saints to know how much he appreciates all they have done for him. But in the end he doesn't have to depend on them, because He depends on God for everything. Paul has learned to accept, and to look for the glorious purpose in all the leadings of the gentle Savior.

VERSE 13

I can do all things through Christ which strengthens me.

I can do all things

This should read, "I can endure all things through Christ." We need to learn to take Christ for all His sufficiency. We have no excuse because we have a God so awesome and powerful, who is absolutely for us. Because of Him we can rise up and walk out of the wilderness. Because of Him we can walk through the wilderness trusting Him all the way, and we can be confident in knowing He will never leave us or forsake us. Our hearts should be focused on His will for our lives, and trust it. We can trust Him to take us through everything.

Through Christ

Christ is everything to our lives, and He is able to do exceeding abundantly above all we ask or think. Christ is our rock and our salvation, and He will take us on to that divine salvation of becoming His bride. His grace is sufficient and able to do all things.

Which strengthens me

Christ strengthens us during the abasing times as well as the abounding times. The joy of the Lord is our strength. We need to let Him be our strength because He died to become our strength. He demonstrated strength when He arose from the dead. Paul went forth with the Lord, nothing else. In trusting Him, that was all he needed. Paul was constrained by the love of Christ, and he didn't care what was done to him; beatings, persecution, or jailings. Paul, because of the love of Christ, knew he was a debtor to all men and said, "Woe to me if I preach not the gospel." God didn't let them kill Paul until it was time, just as God didn't let Jesus die until it was time. By the time Paul was ready to be offered, he had encountered tremendous obstacles, and all enemies lay conquered in the dust at his feet. He came forth more than a

conqueror, and at the end of his tempestuous journey he jubilantly writes, "I can do all things through Christ which strengthens me!" God wants us to accomplish all things through Christ. Paul was like a tree planted by the river of water drawing his all from Christ. His leaf did not wither, and his fruit was sure. May that be how it is with us. Through Christ we can finish our race with a full joy.

VERSE 14

Notwithstanding ye have well done, that ye did communicate with my affliction.

Paul knew they had ministered to him and communicated with his afflictions as much as they possibly could. This stemmed from the fact that they themselves suffered great need and had nothing to give him. But Paul had to suffer much need because he had great want.

VERSE 15

Now ye Philippians know also, that in the beginning of the gospel, when I departed from Macedonia, no church communicated with me as concerning giving and receiving, but ye only.

It seems from this verse that the Philippian church was the only church that supported Paul. He didn't demand an offering anywhere he preached. Paul's didn't demand that people support the gospel. He preached the gospel free of charge, and suffered need many times because of it. But his trust was always in the Lord.

VERSE 16

For even in Thessalonica ye sent once and again unto my necessity.

Many times when Paul was preaching in other cities the Philippian saints were the ones who supported him.

VERSE 17

Not because I desire a gift: but I desire fruit that may abound to your account.

Paul wasn't so concerned with having his needs met because he wanted them to have the fruit of giving, to add even more to their spiritual account in heaven. This verse shows Paul's unselfish spirit. He enjoys their gift, but he is more mindful of their benefit because of giving it. Paul knows it is impossible to recompense and not be recompensed again. If we get involved deeply with the Lord, we will become generous. Paul felt not only the element of gratitude and enrichment of his brethren, but he also saw the relationship of their gift to God.

There is a threefold relationship in the mind of Paul:

1) The wealth to himself.

Paul appreciated their gift to him very much, and it meant a lot to him.

2) The wealth to themselves.

This was a tremendous wealth to them because it would be added to their heavenly account.

3) The wealth to God.

We enrich God when we become like Him. This is the wealth Paul was concerned with.

The things the Philippians did for Paul, in love, went to God like the odor of sweet incense and was well pleasing to Him.

We need to remember in every act such as this there is a threefold influence: on ourselves, on our brethren, and on God. While Paul received their gifts, he knew the giver had received a wealth of glory beyond comprehension. They took from their earthly bank, but their heavenly bank account grew as they shared their earthly treasure. They increased in stature, and in the likeness of the Lord, as well as heaven's wealth. Until we learn the joys of giving we will never know the blessing received from it. When we give to the gospel, whether financially or other wise, we minister to others. This abounds to a spiritual eternal account that will never be lost.

VERSE 18

But I have all, and abound; I am full, having received of Epaphroditus the things which were sent from you, and odor of a sweet smell, a sacrifice acceptable, well pleasing to God.

I have all

There is so much to this statement that it will take eternity to reveal all we have in Christ. Paul is praising the Lord in the depths of the pit he is in. He knew he had it all and he was rejoicing because he knew the dire circumstances he was experiencing were growing him up in all things in Christ to the fullness of God. We will never abound until we have Paul's all: all truth, all the fullness of God, all the blessings in the heavens in Christ, all grace, all joy, etc.

Abound

This word means 'exceeding beyond any known fixed number.' This is an infinite abounding full and overflowing without ceasing, exceeding abundantly above all we ask or think. God gives us an all that never stops multiplying, and that never ceases. We haven't even scratched the surface of what God has for us. Paul, in his abounding, is expressing a heart that only the Holy Spirit by God's Word can express. God's word speaks to us through grace as we receive it. We will have it all.

I am full

The fellowship with the saints is what God is touching us with here. This fellowship brought even more abounding. It wasn't the people, it was Christ in those people. I am full means 'a completeness.' Paul's soul was rejoicing despite all that was against him, and he was full of the joy of the Lord. By God's grace we will finish our race with a heart full joy and rejoicing just as he did.

Having received of Epaphroditus

Paul and Epaphroditus were yokefellows, and they were knit together in divine love.

Epaphroditus ministered to Paul's needs, but Paul's wants were the unsearchable riches of Christ. Above all else Paul wanted these riches for himself as well as for others.

An odor of sweet smell

The reason this was a sweet smelling odor was because it was a sacrifice well pleasing to God. It took a great sacrifice to give it. Our walk with Christ is a sweet smelling savor. Christ doesn't walk in judgment, He walks in love. This love is a divine love that only comes through the knowledge and experience of suffering together with Him. It won't come any other way.

Well pleasing to God

How precious that human efforts have an impact on the divine. The things the Philippians did for Paul in love went on to God as an odor of sweet smell, and this was well pleasing to God. Not just pleasing, but well pleasing. We enrich Him when we become like Him. The life of Christ is a giving and sacrificial life that reaches out.

VERSE 19

But my God shall supply all your needs according to His riches in glory by Christ Jesus.

My God shall supply all your needs

The word supply means 'to fill up to overflowing, exceeding.' This is a beautiful verse meant for Philippian saints. If we want this promise we must follow the ways of giving as the Macedonian saints did. Their secret was that they first gave of themselves. Giving of ourselves means much more than giving of our substance. When we do that, this verse will also apply to us. God will supply all our needs, and this includes the needs of the spirit, the soul, and the body.

Luke 6:38

Give, and it shall be given unto you; good measure, pressed down, and shaken together, and running over, shall men give unto your bosom. For with the same measure that ye mete withal it shall be measured to you again.

Giving doesn't mean just money, but giving of our lives in kindness, patience, and love. The poorest child of God has the wonderful privilege of remitting love debts to heaven's bank. We can bless others through the unsearchable riches of Christ. Paul had nothing, but he boasted of having all things in Christ.

According to His riches in glory

How could anyone ever say how valuable His riches in glory are? Who could put a price on the blessings of God, or put a price on His eternal benefits? God works from an inexhaustible storehouse, and His glory bank repays the least blessing we do in the name of the Lord. Heaven opens to us with all spiritual blessings in Christ, and an ocean of grace is at our feet every day, and we need to cast our nets deep into that grace ocean.

By Christ Jesus

This is what is meant by the riches in glory by Christ Jesus:

Romans 8:32

He that spared not His own Son, but delivered Him up for us all, how shall He not with

Him also freely give us all things?

When God gave us Christ, He gave us the best of all things.

VERSE 20

Now unto God and our Father be glory forever and ever. Amen.

He is our God; He is our heavenly Abba, Father. He loves us and wants our fellowship in the gospel of Christ. All who love Jesus are God's Sons. We give Him thanks in all things, because thankfulness is the greatest expression of faith. Thank you Father that you gave us Jesus, the greatest gift you could give to mankind. When you gave your precious Son to us, you gave us everything, and again we say, "THANK YOU, FATHER!!!"

As Paul grew in grace he became more and more grateful. His letters from prison in his later years are the ones that abound with thanksgiving. The sourness of many in old age can't thrive in the sweet atmosphere of gracious thanksgiving.

VERSE 21

Salute every saint in Christ Jesus. The brethren which are with me greet you.

How precious it is when we love one another enough to be courteous to one another. One of the ways to measure our growth in grace is how much we are concerned with our brother. Saints full of grace should give others a glimpse of the glory of Christ Jesus.

Salute and greet. Paul does this when he is closing a letter he wrote to one of the churches. The words salute and greet mean, 'to receive joyfully, and welcome all saints.' When we really finally fall in love with Jesus Christ we fall in love with His appearing. Until He calls us home, His appearing is now in the saints. Only in Christ can we have deep, true love toward the saints.

VERSE 22

All the saints salute you, chiefly they that are of Caesar's household.

That gentle river of God's word flows to the lowest and vilest of places, even to Caesar's household. Whether it was slaves or dignitaries that received the good news of Christ is not known. Not many of the noble and the rich are converted because they are so self-sufficient, but there are a few who have taken Christ as Savior. God can pick up the vilest or the most affluent and put them on the throne of a prince.

Paul was in Rome about six years, occasionally in prison. The Caesar at that time was Nero, an extremely wicked man. In spite of this wicked Caesar, many in his household began to worship God because of the gospel Paul preached to them. Nero's own wife, Poppaea Sabina, was a worshipper of the one true God.

VERSE 23

The grace of our Lord Jesus Christ be with you all. Amen.

The key to it all and the power of every breath is grace. Grace is unmerited love, unmerited favor, and unmerited mercy, and it is truly seeing things as God himself see them.

2 Thessalonians 2:16

Now our Lord Jesus Christ himself, and God, even our Father, which hath loved us, and hath given us everlasting consolation and good hope through grace.

Grace is our only hope.

Acts 20:32

And now, brethren, I commend you to God, and to the Word of His grace which is able to build you up, and to give you an inheritance among all them which are sanctified.

Grace is necessary to be anything in the sight of God. We need more, and more, and more grace, and the way to get more grace is through the suffering. How else would we realize how much we need Him if we never get into a place we can't get out of without His grace? Grace is needed for everything. Grace is a gift from God to those who have nothing to offer Him in return, but to believe and love Him. Grace is like a shining light that is lighting up the pathway all the way to the throne. It is to our lives as electricity is to a light bulb. Without electricity there is no light.

The way to please God is to take of the cup of salvation and drink deeper and deeper. All believers will go to heaven. But some of believers have been called to the unspeakable heights to rule and reign with Christ for all eternity. God's grace makes this all possible, so we sing with grace in our hearts to the Lord. Paul had a gracious song at the end of his life despite the fact that all had forsaken him. He knew God would never forsake him, and we know that God will never forsake us. Amen. Even so come Lord Jesus!