

AN EXPOSITION OF  
PHILIPPIANS

TIM JAMES



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PHILIPPIANS

An Exposition of the Book of Philippians as Delivered in a  
Series of Messages to the Congregation of Sequoyah Sovereign  
Grace Baptist Church, Cherokee, NC.

by  
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Grace-eBooks.com Publications  
2023

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# ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

With special gratitude to all who gave of their time and efforts in the creation of this book.

May our God continue to make his “work appear unto [his] servants, and [his] glory unto their children. And let the beauty of the LORD our God be upon us: and establish thou the work of our hands upon us; yea, the work of our hands establish thou it” (Psalm 90:16-17).



# CONTENTS

Introduction To Philippians	
Philippians 1:6, 19 .....	9
Confidence	
Philippians 1:1-8.....	13
What Then?	
Philippians 1:9-19.....	19
To Stay or To Go	
Philippians 1:19-26.....	25
Only...	
Philippians 1:27-30.....	29
This Mind (1)	
Philippians 2:1-4.....	33
This Mind (2)	
Philippians 2:5-12.....	39
This Mind (3)	
Philippians 2:5-12.....	45
Do This	
Philippians 2:12-16.....	51
It's Not About Me	
Philippians 2:16-30.....	57
False Teachers Revealed	
Philippians 3:1-3.....	63
The True Dunghill	
Philippians 3:5-8.....	69
Realization	
Philippians 3:9-16.....	73
The Believer's Conversation	
Philippians 3:16-21.....	79

Standing Fast	
Philippians 4:1-6.....	85
Wondrous Peace	
Philippians 4:7 .....	89
Seeing and Perceiving	
Philippians 4:8-9.....	95
Concluding	
Philippians 4:10-23.....	99



# INTRODUCTION TO PHILIPPIANS

## PHILIPPIANS 1:6, 19

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:

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

I have chosen these two verses as a way of introducing the epistle to the Philippian Church or the churches at Philippi. They represent the gist of Paul's message to a church that had troubles, both inward and outward. The outward troubles were due to being under the reign of Nero, an insane and Christ-hating Roman dictator. Inwardly, they were also suffering at the hands of Judaizers who made a fair show in the flesh and questioned their Christianity because they would not submit to circumcision. The Judaizers sought to bring them under the Law of Moses as evidence they were holy. Inwardly, they were struggling because some preachers among them were clearly preaching Christ but were doing so in a manner that divided believers and called Paul's ministry into question.

Concerning these things, Paul declares that they are not to worry. He does not suggest that those who are confusing in their approach to the gospel, or those who are outright enemies of the truth, are to be disciplined, but rather they are to be viewed in the bigger picture. The schemes and plots of men are but blips on the radar of history and are found to fit their assigned function. God has begun His great work of salvation in them, and He will not sleep nor slumber until He has finished it (1 Thess. 5:24<sup>1</sup>). All that

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<sup>1</sup> 1 Thess. 5:24, Faithful is he that calleth you, who also will do it.

transpires between now and the end of time will be but the performance of things that He has staged for the good of His people and the glory of his name (v. 6).

These circumstances are occurrences to men but not to God. Every incident will eventuate in the salvation of the elect (1:19<sup>1</sup>). Paul is like a wise old man sitting on a high pinnacle with all of time, from beginning to end, in his view. He breathes, as it were, a sign of relief as he watches the machinery, the gears, cogs, and engine of providence employ all things to the end of the sure salvation of God's elect. Seeing and understanding this, he sets out to encourage and instruct this beloved church in how to live in and understand their times with a primary emphasis on seeing God as the first cause of all things.

The origin of this church is found in Acts 16. Paul had purposed to go to Asia Minor, but the Holy Ghost forbade him. After a while he decided to go to Bithynia to preach, but again, the Holy Spirit did not suffer him to go (1:6-7<sup>2</sup>). In a vision, Paul saw a man in Macedonia cry for help, and he went to Philippi. On the Sabbath Day he went to a river, sat down to pray, and there encountered a woman named Lydia and preached the gospel to her. She is the ordained reason Paul was called to Macedonia. After hearing the gospel, because God had opened her heart, she attended to the things of God. Lydia was baptized and so was her household. She bid Paul to remain, he did so, and the first European Church was established (1:13-15<sup>3</sup>). Later the Philippian jailer and his house were converted and likely became members of this local body of believers.

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<sup>1</sup> 1:19, For I know that this shall turn to my salvation through your prayer, and the supply of the Spirit of Jesus Christ.

<sup>2</sup> 1:6-7, 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: Even as it is meet for me to think this of you all, because I have you in my heart; inasmuch as both in my bonds, and in the defence and confirmation of the gospel, ye all are partakers of my grace.

<sup>3</sup> 1:13-15, So that my bonds in Christ are manifest in all the palace, and in all other places; And many of the brethren in the Lord, waxing confident by my bonds, are much more bold to speak the word without fear. Some indeed preach Christ even of envy and strife; and some also of good will:

By the time of this writing there were probably many local bodies of believers in Philippi (bishops and deacons). Verse 1:12<sup>1</sup> suggests a number of pastors for a number of households or churches, but Paul addresses the believers there in the aggregate sense.

The believers in this place were very special to Paul. He gives several reasons why these Philippians were special to Him.

The first was born of a reasonable reaction to the suffering of loved ones. Paul felt what these believers were feeling, and to some extent, he was a partaker in their suffering. As an apostle, and thus like a pastor, he is not unlike Christ our Great High Priest, being “touched with the feeling of our infirmities” (Heb. 4:15). His desire was to comfort and encourage them in the predestinated providence of sovereign grace. He reminded them that they and he were recipients of the same saving grace of God (1:7<sup>2</sup>).

Secondly, it is clear he loves them, and they were, to Him, a great source of joy. His desire for them was that they rejoice in Christ, and that regardless of whatever happens to them or him, it is for their good and for the glory of Christ (4:1-2<sup>3</sup>).

Thirdly, they have been especially generous toward Paul for the gospel’s sake. In the face of some men preaching Christ in a manner designed to increase Paul’s bonds, these brethren were yet faithful in seeking to supply the needs of Paul as he was imprisoned (1:15-16; 4:10<sup>4</sup>). These Philippians were a generous people, and even amid trial and tribulation their liberality did not wane.

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<sup>1</sup> Verse 1:12, But I would ye should understand, brethren, that the things which happened unto me have fallen out rather unto the furtherance of the gospel;

<sup>2</sup> v. 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 defence and confirmation of the gospel, ye all are partakers of my grace.

<sup>3</sup> 4:1-2, 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. Beware of dogs, beware of evil workers, beware of the concision.

<sup>4</sup> 1: 15-16; Some indeed preach Christ even of envy and strife; and some also of good will: The one preach Christ of contention, not sincerely, supposing to add affliction to my bonds:

4:10, But I rejoiced in the Lord greatly, that now at the last your care of me hath flourished again; wherein ye were also careful, but ye lacked opportunity.

The real aim of this epistle, as with all the letters of the apostles, is to fix the reader's mind on the person and work of Christ. The most difficult thing in a trial is to refrain from trying to fix the problem. Our carnality and its attendant ego and self-justifying bent will immediately kick into gear when trouble finds us. The big things; catastrophes, control of the universe and such, fall easily in the parameters of our faith in God's sovereignty, but the small things, everyday occurrences, disappointments, and discomfiture seem at first to have nothing to do with our faith but with our *assumed* ability to overcome in the power of our ersatz ability.

We are stymied by what we *think* we can fix. Our natural inclination is to find an answer, when in truth, we do not consider the reason why the trouble exists. Paul saw and understood the problems that plagued these believers and was aware, by experience, that these were merely the flow of human existence. He had suffered through many such trials himself (4:11-13<sup>1</sup>).

The solution and remedy for trials is not a "how to" on fixing them. They are ordained and must come. They cannot be fixed but rather are designed *to fix*, to set the believer's heart and mind on Christ (2:5<sup>2</sup>). This is a fact that every believer knows and has experienced, though it seems with every new trial our memory lapses. The design of the trial is to awaken memory, to cause us to remember that what occurs in our lives is but the hand of our Sovereign, tweaking our existence to set our eyes on Christ. This is Paul's design, inspired by the Spirit of God, to help and strengthen the heart and mind of the believers at Philippi (2:9-13<sup>3</sup>).

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<sup>1</sup> 4:11-13, Not that I speak in respect of want: for I have learned, in whatsoever state I am, therewith to be content. I know both how to be abased, and I know how to abound: every where and in all things I am instructed both to be full and to be hungry, both to abound and to suffer need. I can do all things through Christ which strengtheneth me.

<sup>2</sup> 2:5, Let this mind be in you, which was also in Christ Jesus:

<sup>3</sup> 2:9-13, Wherefore God also hath highly exalted him, and given him a name which is above every name: That at the name of Jesus every knee should bow, of things in heaven, and things in earth, and things under the earth; And that every tongue should confess that Jesus Christ is Lord, to the glory of God the Father. 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. For it is God which worketh in you both to will and to do of his good pleasure.

# CONFIDENCE

## PHILIPPIANS 1:1-8

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:

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

3, I thank my God upon every remembrance of you,

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

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

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:

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 defence and confirmation of the gospel, ye all are partakers of my grace.

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

**I**n these verses Paul is asserting his confidence that the believers in Philippi are true believers, the elect of God (1 Thes. 1:4-5<sup>1</sup>), and that their eternal destiny is secure. Since he is writing by the inspiration of the Holy Spirit, we know that what Paul says of these believers is true. Though he is inspired to say these things, this is nonetheless actually and truly Paul's assessment.

Several things are mentioned that make up the reasons why Paul feels such confidence concerning these believers.

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<sup>1</sup> 1 Thes. 1:4-5, Knowing, brethren beloved, your election of God. For our gospel came not unto you in word only, but also in power, and in the Holy Ghost, and in much assurance; as ye know what manner of men we were among you for your sake.

First, he calls them saints. This is a term that applies to every believer and has nothing to do with the false teaching of canonization. These believers are sanctified and therefore are declared holy by the thrice-Holy God. They are so because Christ had been made to be their holiness (1 Cor. 1:30<sup>1</sup>).

Secondly, Paul and these brethren have a history. He did not pull out some record of their having walked down an aisle to see if they were children of God. They and he had spent time together, and Paul had nothing but good things to remember about their relationship (vv. 3-4).

Thirdly, these believers and Paul shared a mutual love and affection for one another (vv. 7-8). He says it is meet (suitable) to think of them because they were in his heart. This is a simple statement of fact. It is not unusual for believers to think often of each other. One of the marks of love is that the loved one is often thought of because the heart is the seat of affection. Believers joy in thoughts of one another.

Paul's thoughts of love toward these brethren are narrowed to two things.

First his love for them is manifest in thanksgiving for their generosity and liberality toward him, especially since he was in prison for the gospel's sake. This was not the case with all the believers in Philippi. Some preachers were using Paul's imprisonment to seemingly further their own agenda (vv. 15-16<sup>2</sup>). But the Philippians in general have shown remarkable resolve to care for Paul in his time of trial (4:15-16<sup>3</sup>).

Secondly, and part and parcel with their love for him, was their love for the gospel he preached. This church had begun with the opening of Lydia's heart to hear the gospel that Paul preached.

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<sup>1</sup> 1 Cor. 1:30, But of him are ye in Christ Jesus, who of God is made unto us wisdom, and righteousness, and sanctification, and redemption:

<sup>2</sup> vv. 15-16, Some indeed preach Christ even of envy and strife; and some also of good will: The one preach Christ of contention, not sincerely, supposing to add affliction to my bonds:

<sup>3</sup> 4:15-16, 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. For even in Thessalonica ye sent once and again unto my necessity.

More than likely, the Philippian jailer had soon afterward been added to this body, with both his and her houses. This church felt they owed Paul their life. They were set for the defense and confirmation of the gospel. These things proved to Paul's mind and heart that he and the believers there were partakers of the same grace of God. Grace is the common thread that binds believers together in love because it puts them all in the same boat—sinners saved by the sovereign grace of God.

All these things play into the bold statement that Paul makes in verse 6. This statement is one of assurance. "Being confident" simply means that nothing can arise that will shake his confidence. Confidence is, for him, a state of being. This tells us immediately that he is not speaking of self-confidence or any confidence that finds its source in anything on the earth. Paul, in all his epistles, states this singular theme in one form or another (Rom. 3:27; 1 Cor. 1:26-29<sup>1</sup>). Paul avers this truth precisely in this very epistle (3:3-8<sup>2</sup>). Nothing on this earth is the source or cause of Paul's confidence. "This very thing" refers to what follows—the description of the source and the substance of Paul's confidence.

The only possibility for such confidence to exist is that the thing wherein confidence is invested never changes. "I am the Lord. I change not." "Jesus Christ, the same yesterday, today and forever." Those are the words of the immutable God. If asked, every true

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<sup>1</sup> Rom. 3:27, Where is boasting then? It is excluded. By what law? of works? Nay: but by the law of faith.

1 Cor. 1:26-29, But God hath chosen the foolish things of the world to confound the wise; and God hath chosen the weak things of the world to confound the things which are mighty; And base things of the world, and things which are despised, hath God chosen, yea, and things which are not, to bring to nought things that are: That no flesh should glory in his presence.

<sup>2</sup> 3:3-8, For we are the circumcision, which worship God in the spirit, and rejoice in Christ Jesus, and have no confidence in the flesh. Though I might also have confidence in the flesh. If any other man thinketh that he hath whereof he might trust in the flesh, I more: 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; Concerning zeal, persecuting the church; touching the righteousness which is in the law, blameless. But what things were gain to me, those I counted loss for Christ. Yea doubtless, and I count all things but loss for the excellency of the knowledge of Christ Jesus my Lord: for whom I have suffered the loss of all things, and do count them but dung, that I may win Christ,

believer would confess that his or her confidence, his or her assurance is in God or better still *is* God. Confidence in self has been subdued by the knowledge that their salvation, from pole to pole, is God's work on their behalf. If they *pursue* assurance, they cannot find it, and if they *look* to the Lord, they have full assurance. It is "He" that has begun a good work in you. The word "in" may also be interpreted "with" or "for." He has begun a good work (not with your cooperation but with you being used or acted upon) in you or for you (on your behalf). This immediately introduces us to the span of eternal things.

If God began a thing, it was not begun in time. If it is realized in time, it began with God in eternity. So, the salvation, the grace that these believers received, began before the foundation of the world. We know from the clear revelation of scripture that the eternal aspects of grace are Christ's suretyship, election unto salvation, predestination of conformity to Christ, calling, justification and glorification. Along with this is the eternal mechanism of providence that orders all things to their appointed end. I feel for those who think that what they do or do not do somehow affects the outcome of history. It is He that has begun this good work, and who can disannul or turn it back?

The work is called a "good work." There is no doubt it is good for the believer. However, the reason it is good is because He is good. This has to do with His glory (Ex. 33:18-19<sup>1</sup>). It is a good work because it glorifies God in all His attributes. The report of it is called good news or good tidings. The only other work referred to as a good work involved anointing our Lord for His burial, a thing that honored the surety of His death for the salvation of the elect (Mark 14:3-9<sup>2</sup>).

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<sup>1</sup> Ex. 33:18-19, And he said, I beseech thee, shew me thy glory. And he said, I will make all my goodness pass before thee, and I will proclaim the name of the LORD before thee; and will be gracious to whom I will be gracious, and will shew mercy on whom I will shew mercy.

<sup>2</sup> Mark 14:3-9, And being in Bethany in the house of Simon the leper, as he sat at meat, there came a woman having an alabaster box of ointment of spikenard very precious; and she brake the box, and poured it on his head. And there were some that had indignation within themselves,



Paul's confidence was that if God had begun the work, He would also do the work, finish the work, and receive all the glory for the work (Eph. 1:3-6<sup>1</sup>). The wonder and glory of this truth is that the beginning, when God is the author, assures the end. In fact, scripture declares that the end was already set and sure. The beginning was merely the historical opening line of an already complete story (Is. 46:9-12<sup>2</sup>). Christ said, "I am the Alpha and Omega, the beginning and the end, the first and the last" (Rev. 22:13).

The day of Jesus Christ is a two-fold day of finishing. It refers first to the day of His death that finished salvation. Secondly, it refers to His second coming where the final aspect of that finished salvation will be realized: the gathering of the elect and the utter destruction of the enemy. Paul is confident of this very thing.

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and said, Why was this waste of the ointment made? For it might have been sold for more than three hundred pence, and have been given to the poor. And they murmured against her. And Jesus said, Let her alone; why trouble ye her? she hath wrought a good work on me. For ye have the poor with you always, and whensoever ye will ye may do them good: but me ye have not always. She hath done what she could: she is come aforehand to anoint my body to the burying. Verily I say unto you, Wheresoever this gospel shall be preached throughout the whole world, this also that she hath done shall be spoken of for a memorial of her.

<sup>1</sup> Eph. 1:3-6, Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, who hath blessed us with all spiritual blessings in heavenly places in Christ: According as he hath chosen us in him before the foundation of the world, that we should be holy and without blame before him in love: Having predestinated us unto the adoption of children by Jesus Christ to himself, according to the good pleasure of his will, To the praise of the glory of his grace, wherein he hath made us accepted in the beloved.

<sup>2</sup> Is. 46:9-12, Remember the former things of old: for I am God, and there is none else; I am God, and there is none like me, Declaring the end from the beginning, and from ancient times the things that are not yet done, saying, My counsel shall stand, and I will do all my pleasure: Calling a ravenous bird from the east, the man that executeth my counsel from a far country: yea, I have spoken it, I will also bring it to pass; I have purposed it, I will also do it. Hearken unto me, ye stouthearted, that are far from righteousness:



## WHAT THEN?

### PHILIPPIANS 1:9-19

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

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

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

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;

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

**I**n this passage, Paul prays for the brethren at Philippi. He prays that the Lord would equip them for a particular problem that exists within the churches. Though this particular issue is addressed only in this epistle, we know that it is addressed on behalf of all churches throughout the gospel age.

Paul opened this epistle by saying that among these saints there were bishops and deacons. Though we cannot read too much into that, there is nonetheless at least a suggestion of several men preaching in these household assemblies. This is a thing to be thankful for, but as these bishops and deacons are men, individuals with unique personalities and characteristics, their approaches to preaching and pastoring will differ. A dear irascible brother, Scott Richardson, once told me, "More people...more problems."

On a broader scale, the issue that played out in Philippi plays out in the world of believers today. Though some churches still involve households, generally the Lord's people gather in a local place of assembly, each having its own pastor. Each of the pastors are equipped by God with gifts and talents fitted to their congregation. Each one is also a unique individual with a life history, upbringing, and various ways of doing things. These things inform their approach to the gospel and the execution of the ministry they have been given.

Because of this individuality and the fact that the freest man on earth is the minister of the gospel, sometimes minor problems arise that raise hackles and cause temporary divisions. This can also happen in congregations since the people are accustomed to hearing their pastor and doing things in a particular way. To find others doing things differently can cause consternation. It ought not to be, but such is the plight of the sinner saved by grace, whether pastor or congregant.

Paul gives the solution to this problem, though sadly, it is not always followed. The salvation of every believer and the function they serve in the church is of the Lord. It is a sure salvation and is entirely by God's grace (v. 6). Those incidences and circumstances that take place in the life of believers and in the churches attend salvation and will eventuate in glorifying the grace of God (vv. 12, 19). Paul said these things because of the situation occurring at Philippi. Christ (the gospel) was being preached, but some of the preachers were doing so in a manner that was troubling many of the

brethren. Paul defines these different approaches in two ways, both in reference to his imprisonment for the gospel's sake.

In verse 14 he attaches certain attributes to *all* the preachers, even those whose attitudes were troublesome. Paul does not take sides in the issue (v. 14). He says of these two different kinds of preachers that they waxed confident because he was in prison. They were much bolder to speak the word without fear. In verse 15 he makes some distinctions, but the use of the word “some” does not separate them from the “many” in verse 14. The “some” in verse 15 and the “other” in verse 17 make up the “many” of verse 14.

The words used to describe the manner of preaching in verses 15 and 16 are words that we generally do not feel comfortable applying to the brethren, but that is precisely who Paul applies these words to (v. 14). The words that Paul uses to describe the manner of preaching (not the message) are “envy,” “strife,” “contention,” and insincerity. There is an immediate visceral reaction to these words. We don't want our preachers to be tagged with such labels, but here you have it in inspired terms. Here, it is important to remember that this manner of preaching has to do with Paul's bonds or imprisonment. It is *not* about the gospel they preach.

Some preach in *envy* concerning Paul's bonds. Envy, unlike jealousy, which has to do with a sense of entitlement, has to do with holding that someone does not deserve what he has. In this case Paul's ministry from prison, in many ways, was more effectual in the churches than these who were not behind bars. They (evidently) wanted their ministries to be as effectual as Paul's.

They also preached in *strife*. This has to do with debate, which creates variance or a difference between what is expected and what occurs. Believers expected Paul to be successful, even from prison, but some preachers sought a different outcome.

They also preached in *contention*. Men contend for what they view as the prize. The word literally has to do with electioneering or intrigue for office, employing insinuation or innuendo to create supposed contrast. It is not difficult to grasp, with the use of such tactics, who is designed to come out smelling like a rose. These

preachers could not be apostles, but they desire the authority, assumed prestige, and appreciation that attended that office. The most difficult thing to stomach is that they were insincere in their manner. This means they were not pure in motive and were not chaste but rather were immodest in their approach. The reason was to add affliction to Paul's bonds. This means that they sought to elevate themselves by openly and boldly preaching Christ and comparing themselves to Paul who said he was in prison for preaching Christ. "If Paul is in jail for preaching Christ, how come I'm not in jail for preaching Christ...maybe Paul is there for some other crime." Paul makes it clear that their manner of preaching and the reason behind it has not and will not meet with success. They are just "supposing" to add affliction to his bonds.

The other group mentioned are the kind of preachers that believers desire. They are men of good will, preaching out of love, convinced and confident that Paul is indeed in prison because he is set for the defense of the gospel. Naturally we are drawn to this kind of preacher and not the other. But Paul does not allow us a choice between the two.

He says, "What then"? What is to be concluded by these two seemingly opposing factions? Notwithstanding the obvious differences, what are we to make of it? What are we to conclude about these men? In every way, *every way*, whether in pretense (unclear intention) or in truth (with clear intention), Christ is preached by both, and "therein I do rejoice, yea, and will rejoice" (v. 18).

So, Paul's prayer for the brethren is that they would abound yet more and more in knowledge (recognize the difference), in all judgment (sense the confusion it causes), that ye may approve (try or test based on the gospel preached) things that are excellent (discerning the difference), that you may be sincere and without offence till Christ comes. What then is the measure? What do we need to recognize? What are we to sense? What are we to test or try? What difference are we to look for? Plainly and simply—Is Christ preached? Even if it is not in a way with which we

particularly agree—Is Christ Preached? If He is, then we are to rejoice, these things have fallen out rather for the furtherance of the gospel because we know that this shall turn to our salvation. The truth is that other than building on the foundation that has been laid, the rest of the personal contraband that attends the variety of ministrations will be proved but wood, hay, and stubble—rightly consumed by fire (Jer. 23:29; 1 Cor. 3:11-15<sup>1</sup>).

If a man preaches Christ, it will be proven to be a product of grace and not of the talent, personality, or influence of men. Therein we do and will rejoice.

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<sup>1</sup> Jer. 23:29, Is not my word like as a fire? saith the LORD; and like a hammer that breaketh the rock in pieces?

1 Cor. 3:11-15, For other foundation can no man lay than that is laid, which is Jesus Christ. Now if any man build upon this foundation gold, silver, precious stones, wood, hay, stubble; Every man's work shall be made manifest: for the day shall declare it, because it shall be revealed by fire; and the fire shall try every man's work of what sort it is. If any man's work abide which he hath built thereupon, he shall receive a reward. If any man's work shall be burned, he shall suffer loss: but he himself shall be saved; yet so as by fire.





# TO STAY OR TO GO

## PHILIPPIANS 1:19-26

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

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.

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

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

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

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

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

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

**T**he words of Paul are as a prisoner for Christ's sake and a brother that is ready to leave this world to be with Christ. They are words that, to some degree, mirror the heart of every believer. Every believer desires to see Christ but because of responsibilities and loved ones in this life, does not want to exit just yet. Paul, as an Apostle of Christ, believed that he had finished his course but also knew that he was Christ's and would not go to glory before his time (Job 14:5<sup>1</sup>). He was confident in the work of Christ and was sure, in his heart, of what awaited him (2 Tim. 4:7-8<sup>2</sup>).

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<sup>1</sup> Job 14:5, Seeing his days are determined, the number of his months are with thee, thou hast appointed his bounds that he cannot pass.

<sup>2</sup> 2 Tim. 4:7-8, I have fought a good fight, I have finished my course, I have kept the faith: Henceforth there is laid up for me a crown of righteousness, which the Lord, the righteous judge, shall give me at that day: and not to me only, but unto all them also that love his appearing.

This was in no way self-confidence or pride but rather faith in the one who had saved him (v. 6).

Paul is still addressing the Philippians concerning that which is singularly important to the child of God. Christ is to be preached, and Christ is the entire gospel. He knows that the troubles the churches face, and his own bondage, are troubling to many. However, he assures the believers there that these arising circumstances are but God's providence and will eventuate in his deliverance and the salvation of the elect (v. 19). This verse is a declaration of his understanding of divine providence. Though the Word never exactly states the part that prayer plays in the scheme of providence, it is clear that Paul knows that prayer is pre-determinately involved in the working out of God's plan.

God has assured His children that what they ask in the name of Christ, He will give them. Praying in the name of Christ is not merely ending prayer with an appropriate tagline. It is praying with an eye on the glory and honor of Christ in the salvation of sinners. These Philippians were praying for Paul's deliverance and for his health and welfare and Paul knew that their prayer and the supply of the Spirit of Christ would sustain him (4:19<sup>1</sup>). In truth, their prayer was supplied by the Spirit as He revealed the things of Christ to them (John 16:13-15; Rom. 8:26-27<sup>2</sup>).

This Paul believes from the heart. By faith He speaks thusly, "according to" his earnest expectation and hope (v. 20). The words "according to" mean, "as stated or indicated by," or "in keeping with or in agreement with" what was previously declared. Expectation

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<sup>1</sup> 4:19, But my God shall supply all your need according to his riches in glory by Christ Jesus.

<sup>2</sup> John 16:13-15, Howbeit when he, the Spirit of truth, is come, he will guide you into all truth: for he shall not speak of himself; but whatsoever he shall hear, that shall he speak: and he will shew you things to come. He shall glorify me: for he shall receive of mine, and shall shew it unto you. All things that the Father hath are mine: therefore said I, that he shall take of mine, and shall shew it unto you.

Rom. 8:26-27, Likewise the Spirit also helpeth our infirmities: for we know not what we should pray for as we ought: but the Spirit itself maketh intercession for us with groanings which cannot be uttered. And he that searcheth the hearts knoweth what is the mind of the Spirit, because he maketh intercession for the saints according to the will of God.

and hope are things grounded in God given faith (Heb. 11:1<sup>1</sup>). He declares that his hope and expectation is first, “that in nothing he shall be ashamed” or rather never bring shame or dishonor to His Lord or the gospel he has so faithfully declared. To some degree, this is a concern of every believer. It is not a concern that God would be ashamed of him because that could never be (Heb. 2:11; Heb. 11:6<sup>2</sup>). But the believer knows himself, and that knowledge often makes him concerned about his own frailty, depravity, and mutability. Paul's desire is that both now and always Christ would be magnified in his body. This means that he desires that he would always yield his members as instruments of righteousness (Rom. 6:13<sup>3</sup>). He adds that he has a clear understanding that his desires fall outside the scope of his own ability to accomplish.

He knows that the outcome lies solely in the hands of Him who controls life and death. His desire, expectation, and hope is that living or dying, in life or in death he would honor Christ (Rom. 14:8<sup>4</sup>).

Verse 21 is Paul's personal testimony. He says, “For to *me*.” He does not, with these words, speak from pride or to discount any other believer's desire but simply to state that his life belongs to Christ. While he lives in this body, Christ is the reason for and the source of his life (Gal. 2:20<sup>5</sup>). And if his course is finished and he leaves this world, nothing will change. Christ will still be all and even more clearly, because as he gains glory, he leaves sin behind in full revelation of his earnest hope and expectation.

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<sup>1</sup> Heb. 11:1, Now faith is the substance of things hoped for, the evidence of things not seen.

<sup>2</sup> Heb. 2:11, For both he that sanctifieth and they who are sanctified are all of one: for which cause he is not ashamed to call them brethren.

Heb. 11:6, But without faith it is impossible to please him: for he that cometh to God must believe that he is, and that he is a rewarder of them that diligently seek him.

<sup>3</sup> Rom. 6:13, Neither yield ye your members as instruments of unrighteousness unto sin: but yield yourselves unto God, as those that are alive from the dead, and your members as instruments of righteousness unto God.

<sup>4</sup> Rom. 14:8, For whether we live, we live unto the Lord; and whether we die, we die unto the Lord: whether we live therefore, or die, we are the Lord's.

<sup>5</sup> Gal. 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.

Verse 22 is again in reference to life or death. The word flesh, as it is used here, does not refer to the carnal nature but rather Paul's mortal body. If he has yet more of his race to run, then he will run it as he has thus far, bearing the marks of Christ in his body. The meaning of "this is the fruit of my labor" is, "I will continue in the ministry of the gospel." But he is in a dilemma. When knowing that either life or death awaits him, as he considers the ministry that God has given him, he does not know which he would choose if the choice were left to him. Though to live or die are two things, the desire, expectation, and hope is one: that Christ would be, to him, the only one who gets the glory.

Because he is (would be) faced with an impossible choice, he wants to be with Christ, to depart this earth and enter into His glory (v. 23-24). But he does not want to leave the brethren because he wants to continue ministering to them and be of service to them as they face the trials that attend faith. If we could take all our loved ones, our beloved brothers and sisters, with us to glory, there would be no dilemma. But if he died, then he would have to leave them behind.

Paul concludes then, since the Lord has not taken him home and as there is yet breath left in his body, there is work left to do (25-26). Since he is still here, it is for the church's furtherance in the gospel and for their joy of faith. Since he is not dead, then he is with them so their rejoicing may be more abundant in Jesus Christ—not in him—not in his bonds or in themselves, but in Christ. The Lord is life: the object of faith; the substance of the gospel, and the singular joy in life. Paul has confidence, seeing that he is yet alive, that he will be with them again.

The heart of all that Paul and every believer has to say is, "Christ and him crucified" (1 Cor. 2:2<sup>1</sup>). For the believer, this is the answer to the age-old questions that stir the mind of philosophers. Who am I? Why am I here? "Where am I going"?

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<sup>1</sup> 1 Cor. 2:2, For I determined not to know any thing among you, save Jesus Christ, and him crucified.

## ONLY...

### PHILIPPIANS 1:27-30

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;

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.

29, For unto you it is given in the behalf of Christ, not only to believe on him, but also to suffer for his sake;

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

Paul concludes this portion of the epistle with admonitions and explanations. He admonishes the Philippians who, like Paul, desire that he would once again be able to visit with them. He seeks to encourage them facing the possibility that he might never see them again. Paul had a pastor's heart, and it is ever the concern of the pastor that if he cannot be with the brethren, how they will fare. He knows that the Lord will protect and provide for the church, but because their hearts have been united in the gospel as well as all the trials and tribulations that attend the faith, he cannot help but desire to know their estate. His desire is to be with them that their collective joy might be abundant in Christ. If that cannot be, his desire toward them is that they would contend for the faith once delivered to the saints. So Paul, considering the possibility that he might not see them again, admonishes them to walk in Christ as they have received Christ, by the Spirit through faith.

The word “only” could mean “at the very least,” but knowing the heart of Paul, this little adjective means “singularity.” Paul is admonishing the Philippians to do “this only.” Once again, he draws

the minds of believers to their true reason for being and the true object of faith. He does so because this church,, as well as every other church throughout history, is confronted with things in life that can easily take their eyes off Christ. The admonition is to let their conversation (walk, life) be as it “becometh the gospel of Christ.” The word “becometh” means “that which is appropriate to” or “pleasing or attractive.”

Paul employed the same kind of language in Titus 2:7-10<sup>1</sup>. It is sad but true that our natural reaction to words like *becoming* or *adorning* is to think of them in terms of outward, visible appearances. Religion cares much for individual outward appearance and little for the heart. That which *adorns* or *becomes* the gospel is the evidence produced *by* the gospel, and that evidence is as singular as the gospel is. That evidence is faith in Christ—*only!*

Paul does not leave the church in a lurch as to what he means by their conversation “becoming” the gospel. It has to do with the spirit, the mind, and faith, and not in the sense of the *individual*, but in reference to the *body of Christ*. He speaks of individual elements functioning in a singular manner and for a singular purpose. The conversation that becomes the gospel is standing fast in one spirit, with one mind striving together for the faith of the gospel. This is how the doctrine of God our Savior is adorned and no other way. Religion has icons, idols, dress codes, and every manner of visible means to persuade men of their spirituality. The believer has the gospel, *only*. For them, nothing more is needed or desired.

In verse 28, Paul again declares that the believer's troubles are a matter of course, and they are not to be terrified by their adversaries. He has not yet identified their adversaries, or described them, but will point them out as the epistle unfolds. In chapter 3, he calls them

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<sup>1</sup> Titus 2:7-10, In all things shewing thyself a pattern of good works: in doctrine shewing uncorruptness, gravity, sincerity, Sound speech, that cannot be condemned; that he that is of the contrary part may be ashamed, having no evil thing to say of you. Exhort servants to be obedient unto their own masters, and to please them well in all things; not answering again; Not purloining, but shewing all good fidelity; that they may adorn the doctrine of God our Saviour in all things.

“dogs,” “evil workers,” and “the concision.” Each of the descriptions is full of import and denotes the character (dogs), behavior (evil workers), and doctrine (concision) of those who seek to destroy the truth. Paul make it clear that these glory in the flesh and goes on to describe the flesh by using himself as an example of the useless and false notion that personal merit has any part in the salvation of the sinner. In doing so he narrows the scope of the enemy.

All who oppose God are enemies of the truth, but the vast majorities are so easily discernible that a believer can spot them a mile away. The crucifix toters, the emotionalism mongers, and the slick promotion purveyors of this day fool no believer. Our Lord did speak of a counterfeit that was so cleverly wicked that if it were possible would deceive the very elect. Such a counterfeit must embrace the basic tenets of the gospel, but rather than assert the things of the Spirit, it must excite and invigorate the conscience. The gospel quiets the conscience because it answers the law and removes any ground upon which the conscience can accuse.

The counterfeit must convince men that sins have been forgiven but still must be answered for by the individual. Rather than pointing men to Christ, the proponents of the counterfeit turn men's eyes to the law, to rules and regulations. By doing so, they awake the conscience and bring about guilt and fear. Once the conscience is in play, it can only point men to the law for better behavior, and since the strength of the law is sin, men will be plunged into the despair of empty human merit that can never measure up. We are all susceptible to this because of the old man, the flesh—our carnal nature.

Paul says that the believer, however, shouldn't be terrified of them. What they say, do and require are an evident token (demonstrative proof) of perdition (destruction and ruin). But just as he has declared throughout this epistle, this too will prove that the believer's salvation is of God and not of men.

Why is it that our adversaries are an evident token that our salvation is of God? Paul gives the answer in verse 29. It is all part of the program, if you believe it is by the gift of faith. It is given

unto the elect to believe (John 6:65<sup>1</sup>). But that is not all that was given to the believer. It was also given to him (a gift to him) to suffer for Christ's sake. The believer does not seek out ways to suffer or punish himself. Suffering, trials, and tests are a given with the child of God and their purpose is singular. They are, by design, the providential means that God employs to bring His children, who are prone to wander, back to the feet of Christ. Faith and adversaries are God's gifts to His children (1 Cor. 11:19<sup>2</sup>).

In this last verse Paul reminds the Philippians that they know what he is talking about (v. 30). The conflicts that the Philippians are suffering are the same that Paul suffered at Philippi (Acts 16:19-24; 1 Thess. 2:2<sup>3</sup>).

How did that turn out? The man who put their feet in stocks was saved, and so was his household, and they became early members at the church in Philippi that met in Lydia's house. Trials worked out for the furtherance of the gospel, as they always will (1:6, 12, 19, 28<sup>4</sup>).

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<sup>1</sup> **John 6:65**, But there are some of you that believe not. For Jesus knew from the beginning who they were that believed not, and who should betray him.

<sup>2</sup> **1 Cor. 11:19**, For there must be also heresies among you, that they which are approved may be made manifest among you.

<sup>3</sup> **Acts 16:19-24**, And when her masters saw that the hope of their gains was gone, they caught Paul and Silas, and drew them into the marketplace unto the rulers, And brought them to the magistrates, saying, These men, being Jews, do exceedingly trouble our city, And teach customs, which are not lawful for us to receive, neither to observe, being Romans. And the multitude rose up together against them: and the magistrates rent off their clothes, and commanded to beat them. And when they had laid many stripes upon them, they cast them into prison, charging the jailor to keep them safely: Who, having received such a charge, thrust them into the inner prison, and made their feet fast in the stocks.

**1 Thess. 2:2**, But even after that we had suffered before, and were shamefully entreated, as ye know, at Philippi, we were bold in our God to speak unto you the gospel of God with much contention.

<sup>4</sup> **1:6**, 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: . . . **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. . . **19**, For I know that this shall turn to my salvation through your prayer, and the supply of the Spirit of Jesus Christ. . . **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.



# THIS MIND (1)

## PHILIPPIANS 2:1-4

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,

2, Fulfil ye my joy, that ye be likeminded, having the same love, being of one accord, of one mind.

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

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

**T**his passage refers to the manner of life or the conversation of the believer. It is to be becoming to the gospel of Christ, and these words could stand alone as a perfect example of how brethren can find that blessed unity of the spirit in the bonds of peace. But as context defines text, this passage is an elaboration of 1:27<sup>1</sup>. It is also rendered in a comparative aspect. The “one mind,” “one spirit,” and being “likeminded” in verse 2 are finally compared to the very mind of Christ in verse 5.

In 1 Corinthians 2:16<sup>2</sup>, the believer is said to have the mind of Christ. This mind is not that we could ever participate in or instruct Him in the reason or execution of His purpose. But we, by grace and through the Spirit of Truth, understand or discern that which is spiritual (John 15:15; 1 Cor. 2:15; 1 John 2:20<sup>3</sup>). Here, in our text,

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<sup>1</sup> 1:27, 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.

<sup>2</sup> 1 Corinthians 2:16, For who hath known the mind of the Lord, that he may instruct him? But we have the mind of Christ.

<sup>3</sup> John 15:15, Henceforth I call you not servants; for the servant knoweth not what his lord doeth: but I have called you friends; for all things that I have heard of my Father I have made known unto you.

our mind and the mind of Christ have to do with a comparative relationship. On the one hand we are shown the relation of Christ to the heavenly Father, and on the other we are shown the relationship that believers are to have one to another. It may seem like an odd admonition and even impossible to think that how we are to treat with our brethren can be compared to how Christ treated His Father. As it is throughout the New Testament, everything the believer is admonished to do is to be done with eyes on Christ, and this is no different. If any of these exhortations are to be accomplished to any degree, they cannot be a product of the flesh. They cannot be done by looking to ourselves or our lives to discover some kind of quality or trait that might produce them.

Several principles are necessary to get a grasp of these amazing admonitions given in vv. 3-4. The immediate reaction of our flesh to these things informs our spirit that we cannot go to the flesh for assistance.

The first thing is the mind (Rom. 8:5-6<sup>1</sup>). Generally, when the mind is spoken of in scripture it does not address capacity but rather employment (i.e., thinking about, meditating upon—see 4:8<sup>2</sup>). This church was facing some difficult issues. There were preachers of Christ that were using methods designed to divide, to pit brother against brother. There were also legalists (dogs, evil workers, the concision) who appealed to the flesh, the natural conscience, and who had the same intent—to divide. It is obvious that such were gaining some ground, the natural end of which is that brethren begin to look down on one another, considering themselves in opposition to others. It is not difficult to see why the admonitions of verses 3-4 are worded the way they are.

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1 Cor. 2:15, For we are unto God a sweet savour of Christ, in them that are saved, and in them that perish.

1 John 2:20, But ye have an unction from the Holy One, and ye know all things.

<sup>1</sup> Rom. 8:5-6, For they that are after the flesh do mind the things of the flesh; but they that are after the Spirit the things of the Spirit. For to be carnally minded is death; but to be spiritually minded is life and peace.

<sup>2</sup> 4:8, 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.

Secondly, verse 1 speaks of “consolation,” “comfort,” “fellowship,” and the sense of showing mercy. These also apply to verses 3-4. The words “in Christ” qualify what follows and sets the manner in which the admonitions are achieved. Before the comparisons of relationships are made, the believer is to approach them considering the relationship of Christ toward himself. The believer is a sinner saved by grace, and though redeemed and accepted before God, he yet struggles with the old man continually. How often do we choose ourselves rather than Christ? Yet, He always chooses us, comforts us, consoles and fellowships with us, and is merciful to us—always. This then is the way we seek to do right by our brethren, even if they have exhibited an attitude that divides, we are to look to Christ and consider what he has done for us (Matt. 18:23-33<sup>1</sup>). Old John Brown said, “No matter the situation or circumstance, choose mercy.”

Thirdly, the words, “in Christ” are how we are to look at and consider our brethren. We are to see them in Christ, consider them in Christ. When we look at them, we are not to look for their sin but look to believe their righteous estate. We have the mind of Christ. We consider things as He does. Does He see sin in His people? He put their sin away. Has he forgiven His chosen? We are to do the same. Does he see His people as righteous? Then so must we? This goes back to minding the things of the Spirit. This truth

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<sup>1</sup> **Matt. 18:23-33**, Therefore is the kingdom of heaven likened unto a certain king, which would take account of his servants. And when he had begun to reckon, one was brought unto him, which owed him ten thousand talents. But forasmuch as he had not to pay, his lord commanded him to be sold, and his wife, and children, and all that he had, and payment to be made. The servant therefore fell down, and worshipped him, saying, Lord, have patience with me, and I will pay thee all. Then the lord of that servant was moved with compassion, and loosed him, and forgave him the debt. But the same servant went out, and found one of his fellowservants, which owed him an hundred pence: and he laid hands on him, and took him by the throat, saying, Pay me that thou owest. And his fellowservant fell down at his feet, and besought him, saying, Have patience with me, and I will pay thee all. And he would not: but went and cast him into prison, till he should pay the debt. So when his fellowservants saw what was done, they were very sorry, and came and told unto their lord all that was done. Then his lord, after that he had called him, said unto him, O thou wicked servant, I forgave thee all that debt, because thou desiredst me: Shouldest not thou also have had compassion on thy fellowservant, even as I had pity on thee?

is set forth in verse 2. The singularity of like-mindedness, same love, and one mind relate to being “in Christ”.

Applying these principles, verse 3 and 4 are very reasonable. If we consider them in the flesh, they reveal nothing but our want and lack of them. They become words that condemn us rather than comfort or console us. But seeing them by the Spirit, they become sensible and reasonable. We know, as we seek to do them, we will often fail because of the flesh. However, we know that as we see our brethren in Christ, in that moment, these things will be true of every one of them. We will not seek a fight (strife), which would exacerbate the division. We will not boast ourselves in our opposition to a brother to gain empty recognition (vain glory). That would rob Christ of the glory of putting away sin and imputing righteousness.

Since our Lord, by substitutionary, propitiatory sacrifice has put away sin, we best not seek to bring them up as if we had some say in the matter. Rather we will, as we look to Christ and see our brethren in Christ, in lowliness of mind (toward ourselves), take our place as the most needy sinner and esteem others better than ourselves. We will not look on our own things but also on the things of others. Remembering that Paul is addressing divisions, this means that when divisions occur, we are to consider our brother or sister as without sin, forgiven, and perfectly righteous. This cannot be accomplished in the flesh employing the natural mind. The first phrase of verse 5 says it all. “Let this mind be in you, which was also in Christ Jesus.”

Look again at 4:8<sup>1</sup> and see these things as descriptions of your brother or sister. Look at them in Christ, and by the Spirit say to your heart, “He or she is true, honest, just, pure, lovely, of good report, virtuous, and praiseworthy.” They are in Christ, and this is an accurate description of them. A momentary thought about

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<sup>1</sup> 4:8, 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.

perceiving our brethren in this way makes us know that we must look to Christ.



## THIS MIND (2)

### PHILIPPIANS 2:5-12

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

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

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

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

9, Wherefore God also hath highly exalted him, and given him a name which is above every name:

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

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

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.

**T**his passage stands alone as one of the most definitive declarations of the glorious success of the work of Christ for the sure salvation of the elect. We will consider it in that light in our next study. For now, we will view this in the context it was written. As we saw previously, Paul is addressing the mind of the believer (1:27; 2:2, 3, 5<sup>1</sup>). In effect, he is saying to the brethren “think this way.” And this is not a generic admonition that would leave a person without direction as to what to think about. This admonition is specific. We are to “think this way” about our

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<sup>1</sup> 1:27; 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.

2:2, Fulfil ye my joy, that ye be likeminded, having the same love, being of one accord, of one mind. 3, Let nothing be done through strife or vainglory; but in lowliness of mind let each esteem other better than themselves. 5, Let this mind be in you, which was also in Christ Jesus.

brethren, about each other (4:8<sup>1</sup>). We know that our Lord addressed the mind when He told his disciple not to despise (Mind-down or think lowly of) one of His own (Matt. 18:10<sup>2</sup>). Paul is speaking thusly because the circumstances that surrounded these believers are designed to make men choose sides among themselves, and the obvious result of choosing sides is that somebody is always going to come out with the short end of the stick.

The uniqueness of this entire passage is that it is comparative. The key, as far as the believer is concerned, is that he or she is “in Christ,” which immediately discounts the flesh in what we see and what we do (3:3<sup>3</sup>). To set this in a comparative perspective, Paul, being inspired by the Holy Ghost, holds what we are to think about our brethren over against what Christ thought about His Father. Immediately the believer feels a bit overwhelmed by this comparison. We must remember that Paul is talking about *thinking* in a certain way, not as to process but rather as to manner. This is the way this passage is understood as it relates to the believer. To do this, we must look at each element of this description as a specific and particular aspect of how we are to *think*.

In verse 5, Paul asserts the premise of the admonition in a comparison. The manner of Christ's thinking concerning His Father is to also be our manner of thinking concerning our brothers and sisters. The Arabic version renders the first phrase “let that humility be perceived in you.” The Syriac version renders the second phrase, “think ye the same as Jesus Christ.” The next three verses are illuminations of our Lord's thinking as it related to his Father. These descriptions have to do with the admonitions in 2:3-4<sup>4</sup>, and

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<sup>1</sup> 4:8, 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.

<sup>2</sup> Matt. 18:10, Take heed that ye despise not one of these little ones; for I say unto you, That in heaven their angels do always behold the face of my Father which is in heaven.

<sup>3</sup> 3:3, For we are the circumcision, which worship God in the spirit, and rejoice in Christ Jesus, and have no confidence in the flesh.

<sup>4</sup> 2:3-4, Let nothing be done through strife or vainglory; but in lowliness of mind let each esteem other better than themselves. Look not every man on his own things, but every man also on the things of others.



they are about our relationships with our brethren (2:1-2<sup>1</sup>). I know that it seems I am being redundant, but viewing these descriptions as anything other than in a comparative manner remove them far from our ability to even comprehend.

Verse 6 declares that Christ considered Himself equal with God, and we know that He did so because He was God (John 1:1<sup>2</sup>). The first thing suggested here is about the equality among the brethren. It stands to reason that if we understand that we are equal, and *that* by the grace of God alone, it will govern how we think about each other and will then affect how we act toward each other.

There is no hierarchy in the church. Though each member in the body of Christ has their particular function, these are ordained according to the will of God. Though they may be different in their production; some thirtyfold, some sixtyfold, and some a hundredfold, since their function is ordained, each produces one hundred percent. In the economy of God, they are the same—they are equal. This is recognition of a fact, not the assignment of some goal.

Every believer comes from the same stock, is redeemed by the same blood, and has the same imputed righteousness which stands him equally accepted in the presence of God. What this means to the believer is that there is no possible scenario in which he may look down on his brother or sister. There is no exception. Even when rebuking, it is to be done causing none to despise. The only way which that can be done is from a place of equal standing and never from a feeling of superiority or haughty posture.

Verse 7 begins with the word “But.” This qualifies the *only* way this equality can be approached. It must be approached in a manner of considered inequality. This is a matter of the mind. The only way that you can differ from your brother is to, in your thinking, lower

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<sup>1</sup> 2:1-2, If there be therefore any consolation in Christ, if any comfort of love, if any fellowship of the Spirit, if any bowels and mercies, Fulfil ye my joy, that ye be likeminded, having the same love, being of one accord, of one mind.

<sup>2</sup> John 1:1, In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God.

(diminish) yourself. The example given is that Christ, being God, condescended to become a *man*. This willing, willful *humiliation* to take on the seed of Abraham, we cannot fathom, but we can see it as exemplary of how we are to *think* of our brethren. We must willingly condescend in our thoughts of self, relative to our brethren. Reputation is something that folks guard. In our thinking we are to see ourselves of no repute in comparison to our brother. Though equal before God, we are to see ourselves as servants of our brethren. Any downward thinking must be in regard to ourselves, even as the God-Man did.

Verse 8 addresses humility. Folks have various ideas about humility. To a great extent, humility is a mystery. Like meekness, it is a frame of mind and cannot be worked up. It comes as a result of being humbled, and for the believer, that only takes place as we look at our savior and what He has done for us. However, here, by comparison, we are to humble *ourselves*. This does not have to do with appearance or posture but with how we *think*. This simply means taking the lower seat at the wedding feast and willingly giving the higher place to our brother (2:3-4<sup>1</sup>). Our Lord taught this principle throughout His ministry and often rebuked his disciples when they thought of who among themselves should have a higher place.

Finally, this has to do with willing obedience. This was the mind of Christ which the believer has and is the manner in which we are to think of our brethren. We must not think of these things as duty, but as privilege born of love (2:1-2<sup>2</sup>). *Think this way* concerning your brethren.

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<sup>1</sup> 2:3-4, Let nothing be done through strife or vainglory; but in lowliness of mind let each esteem other better than themselves. Look not every man on his own things, but every man also on the things of others.

<sup>2</sup> 2:1-2, If there be therefore any consolation in Christ, if any comfort of love, if any fellowship of the Spirit, if any bowels and mercies, Fulfil ye my joy, that ye be likeminded, having the same love, being of one accord, of one mind.

Because our Lord did this in the manner that He did it, God exalted Him (Matt. 23:12<sup>1</sup>). According to Paul, this is something he had learned and been instructed to do (4:12<sup>2</sup>). Look to Christ.

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<sup>1</sup> **Matt. 23:12**, And whosoever shall exalt himself shall be abased; and he that shall humble himself shall be exalted.

<sup>2</sup> **4:12**, I know both how to be abased, and I know how to abound: every where and in all things I am instructed both to be full and to be hungry, both to abound and to suffer need.



## THIS MIND (3)

### PHILIPPIANS 2:5-12

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

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

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

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

9, Wherefore God also hath highly exalted him, and given him a name which is above every name:

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

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

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.

**A**s we have previously observed, these verses are comparative in content and designed to teach believers the mind they are to have and employ toward their brethren in time of trouble—the most opportune time for divisions to occur. Previously we looked at the mind of Christ towards His Father as He condescended to the place of humiliating Himself in order to be obedient to death, even the death of the cross. He did so because he was mindful of the honor and glory of His father. Thus the comparison for the believer is that he is to exercise the same mindfulness toward his brethren (2:3-4<sup>1</sup>).

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<sup>1</sup> 2:3-4, Let nothing be done through strife or vainglory; but in lowliness of mind let each esteem other better than themselves. Look not every man on his own things, but every man also on the things of others.

Having viewed verses 5-12 within the context, I want to look at these verses alone as they picture the great work of our Lord and get the last comparative thing that is before us, namely that our Lord presents what it is to be a human being and that true humanity is submissive always to the will of God. This is the essential mark of true humanity, and it does not take much consideration for us to see how far we have missed the mark.

Adam was not perfect humanity. Even in innocence he was mutable, and being that he was at the height of natural humanity, the only direction to mutate, to change, must eventuate in a downward course. There was a man in glory before there was a man made in His image. That man, as He is pictured in eternity, is a human sacrifice, a Lamb as it had been slain. We can but here bow to the eternal declaration of the Son of God because we are not equipped to understand it. God's people have been given faith to believe it and in faith do rejoice in it.

The mind of Jesus Christ, in the execution of His saving work, was the mind of a human being perfectly aligned with the will of God, perfectly doing the will of God. As God, Jesus Christ was, in every way, equal with God. The triune Godhead, the Father, Son, and Holy Spirit reside bodily in Jesus Christ, the God-Man (Col. 2:9<sup>1</sup>). Christ is God and therefore thought it not robbery to be equal with God. But as man, He was *not* equal with God.

He was perfect humanity, selfless, faithful, merciful, just, kind, and without sin. Yet, as such, he was not equal with God. This truth often presents difficulty in our minds. We equate perfection with God, and not man, and to declare that Christ, as a man, was perfect, must reasonably suggest that as a man, he was equal with God—both being perfect. But, as a man, he was not equal with God. Neither was Christ equal with any man.

He was perfect humanity. He is what humanity must be to be accepted before God. But humanity, even in perfection, is not deity. Perfect humanity does not mean deity, it means doing perfectly as

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<sup>1</sup> Col. 2:9, For in him dwelleth all the fulness of the Godhead bodily.

a human; doing what a human should do in his relationship to the Almighty. This is where our mind must be for Christ's mind to be in us. If one of us might attain to perfection (an abject impossibility), that would still not make us deity. It would only make us a perfect human being.

Perfect humanity is about the mind of humanity toward God. That perfection lies entirely in submission, subordination, and obedience to God. The highest and noblest place for man is to take the lowest place; one man has said, "to set up our headquarters in the dust." This is why in scriptures we see Christ submitting to the will of God (Rom. 15:3; Luke 22:42<sup>1</sup>). This does not suggest that Christ's will was contrary to the Father's will. His will was in perfect alignment to His Father's will. What this teaches is the human will at its best is subservient to God's will.

"[Christ] in the days of his flesh, when he had offered up prayers and supplications with strong crying and tears unto him that was able to save him from death, and was heard in that he feared; Though he were a Son, yet learned he obedience by the things which he suffered; And being made perfect, he became the author of eternal salvation unto all them that obey him" (Heb. 5:7-9).

These verses are a remarkable declaration of Christ's perfect humanity. Though we cannot in ourselves even imagine such submission, it is the source of great joy to know that He, our representative and federal head, always did that which pleased the Father (John 8:29<sup>2</sup>).

The first thing we see of this submission is that he "made himself of no reputation" (v. 7). The word "made" and the phrase

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<sup>1</sup> Rom. 15:3, For even Christ pleased not himself; but, as it is written, The reproaches of them that reproached thee fell on me.

Luke 22:42, Saying, Father, if thou be willing, remove this cup from me: nevertheless not my will, but thine, be done.

<sup>2</sup> John 8:29, And he that sent me is with me: the Father hath not left me alone; for I do always those things that please him.

“of no reputation” are both one word, and that word is “empty” or “emptied.” The old hymn says, “He emptied himself of all but love” (Isa. 53:3; 2 Cor. 8:9<sup>1</sup>). This is submission.

Second, He took upon himself the “form of a servant.” By every appearance he was a servant of God and of men. When He required of His disciples to be the least, they did not have to look elsewhere for an example.

Third, He was made in “the likeness of men.” This refers to the fact that though He was unlike any man, He appeared to be like every man. He was called Joseph's son. His brethren did not believe Him. His enemies called him a devil, a drunk, and an insane man. The rich young ruler called Him “good Master.” Nicodemus called Him “Rabbi.” Scripture said that He was made in the “*likeness* of sinful flesh.” He took upon Himself the “seed of Abraham.”

As a man, he became obedient. “Being found in the fashion as a man,” He did what men are created to do—He obeyed. His obedience was our salvation. His obedience was to God's law and justice. He was made to be sin, and the penalty for sin is death. So, for us and for the glory of the Father, He obeyed. He voluntarily submitted to the cruelest most ignominious death; the death reserved for the vilest of criminals—the death of the cross. He is the measure of what it is to be perfectly human, and that measure is submissive obedience to God.

Because He did this, because He was perfect in His humanity, God exalted Him. He abased Himself, and God exalted Him. God made His name above every name. And this name is not His title of “Christ” but His given name, His human name, “Jesus” (Acts 2:36; 4:12<sup>2</sup>). The emphasis is put on that name because he, as a

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<sup>1</sup> Isa. 53:3, He is despised and rejected of men; a man of sorrows, and acquainted with grief: and we hid as it were our faces from him; he was despised, and we esteemed him not.

<sup>2</sup> 2 Cor. 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.

<sup>2</sup> Acts 2:36, Therefore let all the house of Israel know assuredly, that God hath made that same Jesus, whom ye have crucified, both Lord and Christ.

4:12, I know both how to be abased, and I know how to abound: every where and in all things I am instructed both to be full and to be hungry, both to abound and to suffer need.



human being, *earned* the right to be Lord over *all that is*. As God, He was always Lord over all, but now as the perfect man He is Lord (Rom. 14:9<sup>1</sup>). To his enemies this is the ultimate distraction. To His friends, this is the ultimate in peace and assurance. He who occupies the throne of Lordship is He who earned that exalted place, meriting it because His obedience unto death redeemed us, saved us, and made us accepted before God. Had He not finished salvation, He would not deserve this exalted position. There is a man in glory, and He is the forerunner for all that follow. Because He did this, His name is exalted to glory by the Father.

Submissive obedience; let this mind be in you.

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<sup>1</sup> Rom. 14:9, For to this end Christ both died, and rose, and revived, that he might be Lord both of the dead and living.



# DO THIS

## PHILIPPIANS 2:12-16

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.

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

14, Do all things without murmurings and disputings:

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;

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

**T**his passage begins with the word “wherefore,” and that tells us that what follows refers specifically to the admonitions found in 2:3-4<sup>1</sup>. As we have seen, the way we are to deal with our brethren must flow from a place of humility. Our Lord in His humanity, the manner in which He dealt with His Father, is given as the exemplar. We are to, in meekness and lowliness of mind (toward self), esteem others better than ourselves, and think on the things of others rather than only on our own things. This is how Christ acted toward the Father in making Himself of no reputation and being obedient even unto the death of the cross. He is our example in living with our brethren in this world (1 John 3:14-18<sup>2</sup>).

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<sup>1</sup> 2:3-4, Let nothing be done through strife or vainglory; but in lowliness of mind let each esteem other better than themselves. Look not every man on his own things, but every man also on the things of others.

<sup>2</sup> 1John 3:14-18, We know that we have passed from death unto life, because we love the brethren. He that loveth not his brother abideth in death. Whosoever hateth his brother is a murderer: and ye know that no murderer hath eternal life abiding in him. Hereby perceive we the love of God, because he laid down his life for us: and we ought to lay down our lives for the

Because Christ did what he did toward the Father in the manner in which He did it, Paul admonishes the believer to be about the business of doing the same. This passage is not about something to be done in special circumstances; it is about *living life*. The occasion that is addressed is our every-day life.

Paul asserts that the brethren are not being given some new thing, some special task, but are to approach this as they have always done, in obedience (v. 12). The use of the word “always” is interesting. The word means “in every instance.” None of us would think to attach the word “always” to our obedience. Yet here it is, inspired by the Spirit, and stated without qualification. This reveals two things.

First it teaches us that the believer is viewed in Christ. How else could we be so described?

Secondly, this assures us that this refers to the every-day life of the child of God whether waking, sleeping, working, taking care of family or even relaxing. The believer lives a life of ordained, predestinated obedience.

This is not something he plans, or something he keeps records of, or even something he is necessarily aware of. He is living life, and *before God*, he is *always obedient*, and since this is his state of being, he is admonished to obey. He does what he does not to be obedient, but rather he does what he does because in Christ, he is *always* obedient (1 John 3:3<sup>1</sup>).

The phrase, “work out your own salvation with fear and trembling” has nothing to do with the salvation of your soul. That was accomplished entirely by the work of the Lord Jesus Christ on Calvary. Remember, this has to do with living life, and it specifically refers to believers’ obedient relationships one to another. It has already been established that the believer’s life is one of obedience, and that is so because he is *in* Christ. This phrase could be read,

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brethren. But whoso hath this world's good, and seeth his brother have need, and shutteth up his bowels of compassion from him, how dwelleth the love of God in him? My little children, let us not love in word, neither in tongue; but in deed and in truth.

<sup>1</sup> 1 John 3:3, And every man that hath this hope in him purifieth himself, even as he is pure.

“Make an outward working of the obedience that God has worked in you.” One version reads, “work about you salvation,” or employ yourself in the things that attend your salvation, or because you are always obedient, obey. The fear and trembling has nothing to do with slavish terror of loss or timidity. It is just another way of stating the attitude to be employed in 2:3-4<sup>1</sup>. It speaks to meekness and humility. The reason that we are to obey thusly, to be about the business of obedience, is because this is God working in us to “will and to do of His good pleasure” (v. 13. Eph. 2:10; Heb. 13:20-21<sup>2</sup>). When all is said and done, our obedience will redound to the glory of Him that is the first cause of it, and our response will be, “I am what I am by the grace of God.”

The manner in which our obedience is to be manifested is found in vv. 14-15, “Do all (these) things without murmurings or disputings.” Our relationships with our brethren are not to be done out of a sense of grudging obligation or heavy duty. Remember that our Lord said that His yoke was easy, and His burden was light. Murmuring is secretly holding a grudge. Spurgeon said that it was a sound a beast would make. It would be to outwardly obey while cursing the brethren under your breath. Disputing is inward struggle and doubt as to the validity of that which is required. If disputing and murmuring occur in your obedience, you can be assured that this is not what God has worked in you.

To do these things in fear and trembling, without murmuring of disputing, is to be blameless and harmless as sons of God without rebuke. This means that men cannot rebuke or bring a valid charge against you as you do these things. The world is more than ready to accuse the brethren of false affection and doing what they do to be

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<sup>1</sup> 2:3-4, Let nothing be done through strife or vainglory; but in lowliness of mind let each esteem other better than themselves. Look not every man on his own things, but every man also on the things of others.

<sup>2</sup> Eph. 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.

Heb. 13:20-21, Now the God of peace, that brought again from the dead our Lord Jesus, that great shepherd of the sheep, through the blood of the everlasting covenant, Make you perfect in every good work to do his will, working in you that which is wellpleasing in his sight, through Jesus Christ; to whom be glory for ever and ever. Amen.

seen of men. This is a wicked and perverse world, and it willingly applies its own vile attributes to those who believe the truth, questioning every action, attributing criminality or moral turpitude to every word and work. They accused Paul of insanity, blasphemy, and law-breaking. They accused our Lord of gluttony, drunkenness, and ignorance.

What our Lord and Paul had in common was that they told men the truth without compromise, loved and forgave the brethren without question. To the wicked and perverse world, this was a clear declaration that they were void of any truth and spirituality, and this they could not abide. Believers shined (v. 15) in their darkness and disclosed their perversion and lies.

The manner of this “shining” is distinctive. Humility and meekness, and even love, can be feigned, and the wicked and perverse world know it because it is their bailiwick, and their practice has made them near-perfect in their prevarications. The believer shines as light, not in what can be duplicated but in what is so singular that nothing can be added to it or taken from it that it might be polluted.

The believer shines as light because his message *is* light (v. 15). They hold forth the light, the gospel, the word of life. The believer does what he does for the gospel’s sake, and his message is a disclosure of all that is false. Because he is a sinner, much of what he does can be called into question, but the message is not about him. It is about what Christ has done and what Christ has accomplished. Light cannot be questioned; it just *is* (Eph. 5:8,13; John 1:1-4; Heb. 4:12<sup>1</sup>). The light, the gospel, does what it does,

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<sup>1</sup> Eph. 5:8, For ye were sometimes darkness, but now are ye light in the Lord: walk as children of light: . . .13, But all things that are reprov'd are made manifest by the light: for whatsoever doth make manifest is light.

John 1:1-4, In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God. The same was in the beginning with God. All things were made by him; and without him was not any thing made that was made. In him was life; and the life was the light of men.

Heb. 4:12, For the word of God is quick, and powerful, and sharper than any twoedged sword, piercing even to the dividing asunder of soul and spirit, and of the joints and marrow, and is a discernor of the thoughts and intents of the heart.

and nothing can hinder it (2 Cor. 2:14-17<sup>1</sup>). The declaration of it is what distinguishes believers as living in that light—they seek to “work out their own salvation with fear and trembling, knowing that it is God that works in them to will and to do of His good pleasure.”

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<sup>1</sup> 2 Cor. 2:14-17, Now thanks be unto God, which always causeth us to triumph in Christ, and maketh manifest the savour of his knowledge by us in every place. For we are unto God a sweet savour of Christ, in them that are saved, and in them that perish: To the one we are the savour of death unto death; and to the other the savour of life unto life. And who is sufficient for these things? For we are not as many, which corrupt the word of God: but as of sincerity, but as of God, in the sight of God speak we in Christ.





# IT'S NOT ABOUT ME

## PHILIPPIANS 2:16-30

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

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

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

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.

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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.

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.

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

30, Because for the work of Christ he was nigh unto death,

not regarding his life, to supply your lack of service toward me.

Paul has spent this second chapter in declaring the way in which we are to treat our brethren. Verses 1-2 are the catalyst and the reason for what follows in this study. Verses 3-4 declare the way the things of vv. 1-2 come to fruition. In verses 5-11, Paul sets forth the relationship of Christ and the Father, in the accomplishing of the salvation of the elect by his humiliation and obedience unto death, as the example of the mind that we are to possess in our relationships with our brethren. In verses 12-16 the believer is admonished to make an outward working of what God has wrought in him; to be about the business that attends the gospel. The way this is to be accomplished is singular. It is to be done by holding forth the word of life, the light of the truth, the gospel. Seeing all things in the light of Christ gives the believer a view of his brethren as they are in Christ and therefore to esteem them highly for Christ's sake (2:3-4<sup>1</sup>).

The remainder of this chapter (our text) is the revelation of the heart and soul of Paul as it relates to the believers at Philippi.

These verses, as they unfold, form the other bookend of chapter 2. The first being 2:1-2<sup>2</sup>. The words of Paul are his feelings and emotions, truly expressed. We must also remember that the words are inspired. They come by the Holy Spirit and are for our understanding and benefit, as He takes the things of Christ (2:5-12<sup>3</sup>) and reveals them unto us. Paul speaks from his heart to the

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<sup>1</sup> 2:3-4, Let nothing be done through strife or vainglory; but in lowliness of mind let each esteem other better than themselves. Look not every man on his own things, but every man also on the things of others.

<sup>2</sup> 2:1-2, If there be therefore any consolation in Christ, if any comfort of love, if any fellowship of the Spirit, if any bowels and mercies, Fulfil ye my joy, that ye be likeminded, having the same love, being of one accord, of one mind.

<sup>3</sup> 2:5-12, Let this mind be in you, which was also in Christ Jesus: Who, being in the form of God, thought it not robbery to be equal with God: But made himself of no reputation, and took upon him the form of a servant, and was made in the likeness of men: And being found in fashion as a man, he humbled himself, and became obedient unto death, even the death of the cross. Wherefore God also hath highly exalted him, and given him a name which is above every name: That at the name of Jesus every knee should bow, of things in heaven, and things in earth,

brethren, and in his words, we see the fulfillment of the admonition in 2:3-4. As we viewed previously, this is not about some special circumstance but is rather about life lived as a child of God. As we look at the last words of chapter 2, keep in your mind the words of vv. 3-4, and we will see Paul's life played out in relation to the brethren.

The first thing we see is that Paul has confidence that the brethren are truly converted to Christ, and they are special to him. The first members were Lydia and those of her house and then was likely added the Philippian jailor and his family. The phrase “in vain” (v. 16b) is not an expression of doubt or possibility but one of assurance. They are living on the gospel they have heard, and he, in a later place in this epistle, called them his “joy and crown” (4:1<sup>1</sup>).

Verses 16-17 are the quintessential expression of verses 3-4<sup>2</sup>. Paul felt in his heart that the price he would pay for declaring the gospel was death. But inwardly, he held out some hope to see the brethren again (v. 24). He felt that he would die or be put to death for the sake of the gospel. The language of these verses, Paul's words, declares that if he dies, it would be gain. He would be as an offering poured forth, a drink offering of thanksgiving and praise. He is saying that compared to the brethren that were converted at Philippi through his preaching, his life did not matter at all. If he dies for preaching the gospel that brought faith in Christ to these brethren, he will rejoice. It was the ministry to the brethren that mattered—not him. The gospel was not about him. The conversion of these brethren was not about him. He had been given a course to run, and if the finish line was the end of him, that would be fine. He had seen the gospel he preached bring forth children of God

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and things under the earth; And that every tongue should confess that Jesus Christ is Lord, to the glory of God the Father. 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.

<sup>1</sup> 4:1, Therefore, my brethren dearly beloved and longed for, my joy and crown, so stand fast in the Lord, my dearly beloved.

<sup>2</sup> 3-4, Let nothing be done through strife or vainglory; but in lowliness of mind let each esteem other better than themselves. Look not every man on his own things, but every man also on the things of others.

(Acts 20:24<sup>1</sup>). If he dies for the gospel's sake, the brethren also have cause to rejoice. Paul holds these brethren in higher esteem than his own life.

Further, he holds nothing back from them. Because he cannot come to them, he sends his best man to them. Timothy was his helper, friend, and spiritual son, having been converted under Paul's ministry. Paul's desire is to see them comforted in their times of trouble so that he may be comforted, knowing how they were doing. He was thinking on their things, not his own things. Paul and Timothy were of the same mind, same spirit, and precisely the same in the gospel they preached (v. 20). Timothy will “naturally” care for their estate as if Paul were there himself. The word “naturally” does not mean carnally, but rather speaks to the fact that Timothy would care for the needs of their life. Faith worketh by love, and that love is expressed in caring for the household of faith in both spiritual and natural necessities (Matt. 25:34-40; James 2:14-17; 1 John 3:16-18<sup>2</sup>). The chief qualification of Timothy is that he does not seek his own but those things that are Christ's (vv. 3-4). Paul employs the same kind of language in reference to himself and Timothy as he

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<sup>1</sup> Acts 20:24, But none of these things move me, neither count I my life dear unto myself, so that I might finish my course with joy, and the ministry, which I have received of the Lord Jesus, to testify the gospel of the grace of God.

<sup>2</sup> Matt. 25:34-40, Then shall the King say unto them on his right hand, Come, ye blessed of my Father, inherit the kingdom prepared for you from the foundation of the world: For I was an hungred, and ye gave me meat: I was thirsty, and ye gave me drink: I was a stranger, and ye took me in: Naked, and ye clothed me: I was sick, and ye visited me: I was in prison, and ye came unto me. Then shall the righteous answer him, saying, Lord, when saw we thee an hungred, and fed thee? or thirsty, and gave thee drink? When saw we thee a stranger, and took thee in? or naked, and clothed thee? Or when saw we thee sick, or in prison, and came unto thee? And the King shall answer and say unto them, Verily I say unto you, Inasmuch as ye have done it unto one of the least of these my brethren, ye have done it unto me.

James 2:14-17, What doth it profit, my brethren, though a man say he hath faith, and have not works? can faith save him? If a brother or sister be naked, and destitute of daily food, And one of you say unto them, Depart in peace, be ye warmed and filled; notwithstanding ye give them not those things which are needful to the body; what doth it profit? Even so faith, if it hath not works, is dead, being alone.

1 John 3:16-18, Hereby perceive we the love of God, because he laid down his life for us: and we ought to lay down our lives for the brethren. But whoso hath this world's good, and seeth his brother have need, and shutteth up his bowels of compassion from him, how dwelleth the love of God in him? My little children, let us not love in word, neither in tongue; but in deed and in truth.

has used for the relationship to be exercised toward the brethren; “as a son with the father”.

Finally, Paul speaks to the brethren of one who is familiar to them, one who exemplifies what this entire chapter addresses. His name is Epaphroditus. Paul refers to him in glowing terms (v. 25). He had been sent from Philippi with a gift for Paul in prison. While with Paul, serving and laboring with him, Epaphroditus became very ill. He was near to death by the estimation of all around him. Epaphroditus longed to be with those at Philippi and was distressed about it. Note the wording of verse 26. He was distressed, not for himself, but he was distressed that the brethren at Philippi had heard about his sickness. He was concerned about how the knowledge of his sickness might be affecting them (v. 4). Evidently, Epaphroditus did not go to a faith healer, but one would have probably told him he didn't have enough faith anyway.

God graciously healed Epaphroditus, and Paul was sending him back to the people he loved and those who loved him. This lifted Paul's spirits, as he was one who wept with those who wept. Paul's sorrow had been two-fold. First, he was sorrowful that Epaphroditus was sick, and secondly, that he had gotten sick while ministering to him with a gift from Philippi.

Paul's joy was to return Epaphroditus to his brethren as an example of one who has lived by the principles of vv. 3-4. Verse 30 declares exactly that.

“Because for the work of Christ he was nigh unto death, not regarding his life, to supply your lack of service toward me” (v.30).

It was all for the glory of God in Christ.



# FALSE TEACHERS REVEALED

## PHILIPPIANS 3:1-3

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.

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

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

**I**n these first three verses of chapter 3, Paul warns the believers of another threat among them. He warns them of false teachers whom he calls dogs, evil workers, and the concision. Each of these titles are very descriptive, and they all have to do with enemies of the cross. Since this is the case and since the cross is the declaration of Christ's finished salvation, the threat among them is the teaching that human beings merit righteousness before God by something they do or do not do. Those who propose that righteousness is anything other than Christ alone, prove themselves to be enemies of the cross. In verse 3, Paul describes the true believer and does so in terms that address the error of the enemies of the cross.

In verse 1, Paul begins with the word “finally.” He is speaking of the things that he has taught in the first two chapters as ample reason for the believer to rejoice. He has evidently addressed or written to these brethren about the enemies of the cross before, and he does not consider it a burden to write to them about it again. He says that to repeat himself is safe for them or will serve to make them safe from their enemies. Pastor Jim Byrd once brought a message on declaring the gospel from 1 Corinthians 15:1<sup>1</sup>. He

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<sup>1</sup> 1 Corinthians 15:1, Moreover, brethren, I declare unto you the gospel which I preached unto you, which also ye have received, and wherein ye stand.

expertly worked over the word “declare.” It means two things. First, it means to preach the gospel as if it were the first time your hearers have ever heard it, and secondly, to preach the gospel as a way to remind those who have heard it. Paul is approaching this subject in the same manner.

In verse 2, he describes the enemies of the cross in three ways. He does not try to appease or mollify those who oppose the truth. He does *not* put them in a group of brethren who speak some truth or are merely of a different opinion. He first describes them as to their character, and he speaks of *religious* character. These false ones are not in the bars and bordellos. They are in the assembly seeking to undermine the gospel of grace and bring believers into bondage.

Paul first describes them as “dogs” and tells believers to beware of them. Gill said that the Jews of old had a saying, “The face of that generation (in which the Messiah shall come) shall be, ‘as the face of a dog.’” These are called dogs because they are among those who have heard and seemingly embraced the truth but have, as a dog, returned to their vomit (2 Peter 2:22<sup>1</sup>). They are like dogs in the understanding of the gospel and their interest in it (Isa. 56:10<sup>2</sup>). They are dogs because they are outside the fold, not belonging and not welcome in the family of God (Rev. 22:15<sup>3</sup>). They are dogs because they have no taste for the feast of fat things, wine on the lees, well refined. They salivate over carrion; that which is defiled, dead flesh consumed in putrefaction. They are like maggots that cannot survive on anything that is alive. They are enemies of the cross.

Secondly, Paul calls them “evil workers.” This gives us a sense of how the word “evil” is employed in the word of God. It is primarily the heart and actions of those who, in their religion, while espousing a love for truth actually oppose the truth. They are not

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<sup>1</sup> 2 Peter 2:22, 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.

<sup>2</sup> Isa. 56:10, His watchmen are blind: they are all ignorant, they are all dumb dogs, they cannot bark; sleeping, lying down, loving to slumber.

<sup>3</sup> Rev. 22:15, For without are dogs, and sorcerers, and whoremongers, and murderers, and idolaters, and whosoever loveth and maketh a lie.



irreligious. They are religiously evil in the name of Christ (Matt. 7:21-23<sup>1</sup>). Note also that they are workers. They are not idle in their pursuit of their hatred for the truth. They are workers. Their work is evil, but they mean business, and they are tireless in their efforts because they believe that their eternal life depends on their personal merit. Like Saul of Tarsus, they believe they are going about doing good.

Thirdly, Paul calls them the “concision.” This word means, “flesh cutters.” They sought to bring the gentiles under the law by requiring circumcision as evidence that they were true believers (Acts 15:1; Gal. 5:1-4<sup>2</sup>). Their entire existence in religion was efforts of the flesh, and circumcision was merely the first step in a legal religious existence, the first star in their crown of personal righteousness. True circumcision has to do with the *heart*, the inward man, not with the outward flesh (Deut. 10:16-17<sup>3</sup>).

“For he is not a Jew, which is one outwardly; neither is that circumcision, which is outward in the flesh: But he is a Jew, which is one inwardly; and circumcision is that of the heart, in the spirit, and not in the letter; whose praise is not of men, but of God” (Rom. 2:28-29).

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For he is not a Jew, which is one outwardly; neither is that circumcision, which is outward in the flesh: But he is a Jew, which is one inwardly; and circumcision is that of the heart, in the spirit, and not in the letter; whose praise is not of men, but of God.<sup>1</sup> **Matt. 7:21-23**, Not every one that saith unto me, Lord, Lord, shall enter into the kingdom of heaven; but he that doeth the will of my Father which is in heaven. Many will say to me in that day, Lord, Lord, have we not prophesied in thy name? and in thy name have cast out devils? and in thy name done many wonderful works? And then will I profess unto them, I never knew you: depart from me, ye that work iniquity.

<sup>2</sup> **Acts 15:1**, And certain men which came down from Judaea taught the brethren, and said, Except ye be circumcised after the manner of Moses, ye cannot be saved.

**Gal. 5:1-4**, Stand fast therefore in the liberty wherewith Christ hath made us free, and be not entangled again with the yoke of bondage. Behold, I Paul say unto you, that if ye be circumcised, Christ shall profit you nothing. For I testify again to every man that is circumcised, that he is a debtor to do the whole law. Christ is become of no effect unto you, whosoever of you are justified by the law; ye are fallen from grace.

<sup>3</sup> **Deut. 10:16-17**, Circumcise therefore the foreskin of your heart, and be no more stiffnecked. For the LORD your God is God of gods, and Lord of lords, a great God, a mighty, and a terrible, which regardeth not persons, nor taketh reward.

These three descriptions envelop the false notions of human merit and set the basis for what Paul says in the remainder of this chapter.

In verse 3, Paul's description of the brethren reveals the distinction between the false teachers he has described and true believers. He begins the verse with the word "for," which means "because." Believers are to beware these false teachers "because" believers are the true circumcision. This means that those who practice the rite of circumcision to merit righteousness are not really the circumcision at all. They are soul butchering flesh cutters. Believers (the true circumcision) are those we just read about in Romans 2.

He describes the believer, the *circumcision*, in three ways.

First, they worship God in the Spirit. This discounts the flesh altogether. The manner of worship is hearing the gospel, the record of Christ's finished work. This worship is done "in the spirit," and that means the Spirit takes the things of Christ and reveals them to the believer. The result is rejoicing in thanksgiving and praise for what God has done.

Secondly, that rejoicing is singular. The believer rejoices in Christ Jesus. This also, excludes those false teachers and their doctrine of personal merit and personal righteousness. They rejoice in everything but Christ. They rejoice in the flesh (Gal. 6:12-13<sup>1</sup>). Believers rejoice only in Christ Jesus because His work on the cross was, and is, *all* their salvation.

Finally, Paul puts the last nail in the coffin of the concision. The believer, the *circumcision*, has no confidence in the flesh. None of the efforts of legal religion are for the believer or of any interest to them. He knows himself, and he knows that in his flesh dwells no good thing, so he has no confidence in anyone but Christ (1 Cor.

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<sup>1</sup> Gal. 6:12-13, As many as desire to make a fair shew in the flesh, they constrain you to be circumcised; only lest they should suffer persecution for the cross of Christ. For neither they themselves who are circumcised keep the law; but desire to have you circumcised, that they may glory in your flesh.

1:26-31; Jer. 9:23-24<sup>1</sup>). The vital, basic distinction between the false and the true is the distinction between the flesh and the Spirit (Gal. 5:16-18<sup>2</sup>).

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<sup>1</sup> **1 Cor. 1:26-31**, For ye see your calling, brethren, how that not many wise men after the flesh, not many mighty, not many noble, are called: But God hath chosen the foolish things of the world to confound the wise; and God hath chosen the weak things of the world to confound the things which are mighty; And base things of the world, and things which are despised, hath God chosen, yea, and things which are not, to bring to nought things that are: That no flesh should glory in his presence. But of him are ye in Christ Jesus, who of God is made unto us wisdom, and righteousness, and sanctification, and redemption: That, according as it is written, He that glorieth, let him glory in the Lord.

**Jer. 9:23-24**, Thus saith the LORD, Let not the wise man glory in his wisdom, neither let the mighty man glory in his might, let not the rich man glory in his riches: But let him that glorieth glory in this, that he understandeth and knoweth me, that I am the LORD which exercise lovingkindness, judgment, and righteousness, in the earth: for in these things I delight, saith the LORD.

<sup>2</sup> **Gal. 5:16-18**, This I say then, Walk in the Spirit, and ye shall not fulfil the lust of the flesh. For the flesh lusteth against the Spirit, and the Spirit against the flesh: and these are contrary the one to the other: so that ye cannot do the things that ye would. But if ye be led of the Spirit, ye are not under the law.



# THE TRUE DUNGHILL

## PHILIPPIANS 3:5-8

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;

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

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

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.

**T**hese words of Paul are a definition of confidence in the flesh. Though he occasionally spoke of the flesh in reference to the physical body and its members, almost always in his epistles, every reference to the flesh was a reference to carnality. Also, those references to carnality usually had to do with establishing a religious personal righteousness that would oblige God to accept someone. Since such a notion is false and blasphemous at the core, Paul asserted that the believer was to have no confidence (trust) in the flesh (3:4; 1 Cor. 1:26-29<sup>1</sup>). In this passage, he uses himself as an example, both in the past and the present, as to why the believer is to not trust the flesh. His argument is simple. If the best thing won't cut it, anything less certainly won't.

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<sup>1</sup> 3:4, Though I might also have confidence in the flesh. If any other man thinketh that he hath whereof he might trust in the flesh, I more.

1 Cor. 1:26-29, For ye see your calling, brethren, how that not many wise men after the flesh, not many mighty, not many noble, are called: But God hath chosen the foolish things of the world to confound the wise; and God hath chosen the weak things of the world to confound the things which are mighty; And base things of the world, and things which are despised, hath God chosen, yea, and things which are not, to bring to nought things that are: That no flesh should glory in his presence.

The word “though” refers to the last phrase of verse 4<sup>1</sup>. He is saying that if it were possible to merit a righteous standing based upon personal achievement or credentials, and if any man might declare or believe that he had done so, he (Paul) had more reason to vouch for himself than anyone.

He first speaks of his pedigree and credentials as reason (if it mattered) to boast in the flesh.

His pedigree was that he was circumcised the eighth day after his birth. This is an assertion that he had fulfilled the law before he even knew what the law was. He was of the stock of Israel. We would say in modern terms that he was a blueblood or “old money” as to his lineage. He was of the tribe of Benjamin, from which tribe came the first king of Israel, Saul, Paul's namesake. He was an Hebrew of the Hebrews. There was not a drop of Gentile blood flowing in his veins. As to his efforts and achievements in the flesh, they were stellar.

In reference to the law, he was a Pharisee. He was pure as the driven snow, had the clothes to prove it, and was not timid about letting folks know that he was a rock star.

His zeal (v. 6) was unquestionable. He went about seeking to destroy any challenge to his religion, employing the threat of death or prison to all who disagreed with Him.

Concerning the righteousness that is in the law, required by the law, he was blameless (free from fault or defect).

These things, which he considered gain (profitable to him in the flesh), he counted as loss when he met Christ. He now has no confidence in anything he considered gain before he met Christ. Most every believer would agree that *nothing* before Christ was of any value as righteousness before God and engendered no reason for trusting the flesh (v. 7). This scenario would get a resounding “Amen!” from just about everyone who names the name of Christ.

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<sup>1</sup> verse 4, Though I might also have confidence in the flesh. If any other man thinketh that he hath whereof he might trust in the flesh, I more.

Unfortunately, this is as far as many go in reference to the flesh. Discounting the past is easy and is fodder for testimony meetings where folks are given leave to dredge up all their past wickedness, so they can show what a qualified candidate for salvation they are.

Most of what travels under the umbrella of what is called Christianity believes that after meeting Christ the flesh is somehow changed. They believe that nature does improve, or at least can improve, by the asserted power and commitment of the individual. Men heartily confess that what they did before knowing Christ is of no value but somehow harbor notions that what they now do is meritorious. They may call it “sanctification” or “progressive sanctification,” but it is neither. The flesh will not and cannot improve. Adam will not become pure or improve on any level. Flesh is flesh, and it will be contrary to the spirit until it is silenced in death (John 3:6; Gal. 5:17<sup>1</sup>).

This being absolute fact, Paul leaves the valueless past and comes to the valueless present concerning the flesh. Before, he *counted* (v. 7), now he *counts* (v. 8). In reference to all things of the flesh, what he is and what he does, he counts but loss. He does not count it all loss because of what he now does but what and who he now knows. He declares that nothing but the excellency of the knowledge of Christ is of any value to the believer. To put teeth into his statement, Paul speaks of the one thing that folks like to assert as proof they are indeed a true child of God. He addresses the thing that is universally held as meritorious—suffering. “I have suffered the loss of all things” (Mark 10:28). Paul declares that he has suffered the loss of all things *for Christ*. This is often the theme of the religion of the flesh and falls in the broad category of “What have you done for Jesus” or “Only what you do for Jesus will last.” Paul is saying that suffering the loss of everything, and he had suffered as few had, he was hated, stoned, beaten, and imprisoned

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<sup>1</sup> John 3:6, That which is born of the flesh is flesh; and that which is born of the Spirit is spirit.

Gal. 5:17, For the flesh lusteth against the Spirit, and the Spirit against the flesh: and these are contrary the one to the other: so that ye cannot do the things that ye would.

for the gospel he preached. But he put all that loss and suffering into the toilet and says that suffering the loss of all things were but the loss of temporal things, things of the flesh, and suffering and loss are flesh and not to be trusted.

He further discounts and disowns all of it by resigning it to the dung-heap (v. 8). What I am personally, what I do personally, and what I have lost and suffered personally is *manure*.

This descriptive categorization of the flesh, past and present, is surely in reference to a couple of things in the word of God that Hannah declared in her prayer. She declared that God takes the beggar from the *dunghill* and sets him among princes. Paul declares this dunghill to be the flesh, both before and after Christ.

Another reference is to a weapon carried by some Hebrew soldiers. It was a spear that had a sharpened point on one end and a small spade on the other. The pointed end represents the gospel—the thrusting weapon of the believer. The spade was for digging a personal latrine for the soldier's excrement to be buried. The picture is plain. The word is not of us. It is of God. It is the only weapon we have. What proceeds from *us* is dung and must be buried out of sight.

“That I may win Christ” is simply another way of saying that everything of the flesh is loss, and Christ alone is gain. Salvation by grace is the unqualified declaration that what we are, do, have done, or shall do has no merit. Christ is it. He is *all* for the believer. Having “no confidence in the flesh” is looking to Christ alone as our wisdom, righteousness, sanctification, and redemption.



## REALIZATION

### PHILIPPIANS 3:9-16

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:

10, That I may know him, and the power of his resurrection, and the fellowship of his sufferings, being made conformable unto his death;

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

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.

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,

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

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

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

S adly, this passage has become fodder for the legalist and even for those who hold that Christ did not finish the work of salvation, and consequently, man can lose his salvation. The language of the passage certainly speaks of attaining, of pressing toward something, and of things that may be possessed, things that may be better. If Paul is speaking of salvation, then he is saying that so far, *he is not saved*. But it is context that determines the meaning of text, and the context of this passage is referring to having confidence in Christ and no confidence in the flesh.

Being a creature still possessed of the nature he was born with, Paul speaks in terms of a greater realization of what God has wrought for him. Paul is a sinner saved by grace, and because he is, he is righteous and holy before God. God remembers his sins no more, and he is already seated in heavenly places in Christ, but his nature, the old man, is ever about the business of interfering with his enjoyment of what he has by grace. He cannot lose what he has because he did not procure it. Here, he longs for the day that the accuser in his bosom will no longer be able to hinder him in the enjoyment of his salvation.

For now, the flesh is subdued by the Spirit, but it is not eradicated. Its right to rule has been removed but its wretched, subtle influence has not been removed. That is why we are admonished to *reckon* the old man to be dead or to have died. Also, it is why Paul said such things as, “Now we look through a glass darkly but then face to face.” The fact is that nothing we do can ever affect God's relationship with us, but what we do can certainly affect our relationship with him. We do not sin where that sin has no effect on our relationship with God (Ps. 51:12<sup>1</sup>). Liberty can be employed as license, and when it is, joy of salvation goes down the tubes.

It is from this place of having declared the uselessness of the flesh, how the strides he made and successes he had in the flesh were nothing but manure and counted but loss and dung, that Paul says what is recorded in this passage. Even words like “counted” suggests a determination to put flesh where it belongs but not necessarily success in doing so. Paul's longing to find, to be found, to win, and to attain is a longing for the day when he will cross over the finish line and be done with the race. It is also a longing that while he is here, as a man of both flesh and spirit, he desires and seeks to find a greater enjoyment and realization of what he already fully possesses by grace (“thus minded,” v. 15).

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<sup>1</sup> Ps. 51:12, Restore unto me the joy of thy salvation; and uphold me with thy free spirit.

What is said in this passage is an illumination of what he said in the last phrase of verse 8, “that I may win Christ” (a comparative statement). The flesh is loss; Christ is gain. We might approach this by asking the question, “What would it be like to live without the influence of the flesh?” I know the concept is far-fetched, but as it is a promise, it will be fully realized when we see Christ. What must be remembered, as we view the text of this study, is that everything here has an object. It is Christ. Note that when Paul speaks of desiring something, that thing is Christ—in Him (v. 9), His resurrection (v. 10), His sufferings (v. 10), and His death (v. 10).

He begins by defining this desire as to “be found *in Christ*” without the flesh (v.9). Paul has been *in Christ* from the foundation of the world. His desire here is to be found with only the righteousness of Christ and not the presumed righteousness of the flesh born of the Law. That desired righteousness is through the faith of Christ (His work of salvation). That righteousness is of God and is realized by God-given faith. What would it be like to have this without the flesh?!

Secondly, that “I may know Him” (v. 10). Again, Paul knows Christ by faith (John 17:3<sup>1</sup>). Here he desires to know Him in a more full way: “in the power of his resurrection and the fellowship of His suffering, being made conformable unto His death.” The power of Christ's resurrection is the same power that quickened Paul (Eph. 1:19-20<sup>2</sup>). He desires to appreciate being raised from the dead without the flesh inhibiting that enjoyment. He desires to have fellowship with Christ's suffering. Paul had suffered much. He bore in his body the marks of Christ. The fellowship is a rich understanding of exactly what it cost to save his soul and the extent of his sin, for which Christ suffered without the interference of the

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<sup>1</sup> John 17:3, And this is life eternal, that they might know thee the only true God, and Jesus Christ, whom thou hast sent.

<sup>2</sup> Eph. 1:19-20, And what is the exceeding greatness of his power to us-ward who believe, according to the working of his mighty power, Which he wrought in Christ, when he raised him from the dead, and set him at his own right hand in the heavenly places.

flesh. He desires to be made “conformable” to Christ's death. Again. Paul knew that he died with Christ, and he was dead, and his life was hid with Christ in God. His desire was to be able to fully reckon the old man to be dead without the flesh continually reminding him of his evident presence (Rom. 7:15-25<sup>1</sup>). He desires that he could come to that blessed place.

He speaks of this in terms of attaining, so it can only have to do with desire and not with that which he already possesses (vv. 11-12). “If by any means” does not include any *carnal* means. He means that which is available to him in the Spirit—worship, study, prayer, fellowship, and communion with the brethren. The resurrection of the dead is assured him by Christ, who is the resurrection and the life. This attainment can only mean a full enjoyment of the fact that someday this body of flesh will fold up like a tent, and he will experience it. He was apprehended for this, and he wants to apprehend it—to lay hold of it. He knows that he possesses it, and he knows that he is perfect in Christ. He desires maturity of understanding, growth in grace to fully rest in what God has done for him.

Verse 13 is a confession that he is not at that place yet, and if *he* is not, we can be pretty sure that *we* aren't either. This is what we *can* do. We can live in the now and have hope in Christ. Yesterday, with all its failures and even its successes, is gone, and whatever awaits me is in Christ. So, I will press on toward Him (v. 14). The calling is high, lofty, and the thing I desire to fully realize. Christ is

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<sup>1</sup> Rom. 7:15-25, For that which I do I allow not: for what I would, that do I not; but what I hate, that do I. If then I do that which I would not, I consent unto the law that it is good. Now then it is no more I that do it, but sin that dwelleth in me. For I know that in me (that is, in my flesh,) dwelleth no good thing: for to will is present with me; but how to perform that which is good I find not. For the good that I would I do not: but the evil which I would not, that I do. Now if I do that I would not, it is no more I that do it, but sin that dwelleth in me. I find then a law, that, when I would do good, evil is present with me. For I delight in the law of God after the inward man: But I see another law in my members, warring against the law of my mind, and bringing me into captivity to the law of sin which is in my members. O wretched man that I am! who shall deliver me from the body of this death? I thank God through Jesus Christ our Lord. So then with the mind I myself serve the law of God; but with the flesh the law of sin.

the prize when the race is done, and I am looking to Him (2 Tim. 4:7-8<sup>1</sup>).

Let us all be like minded—seeking the same thing. It is a mark of perfection (maturity). And if we are not there yet, God will reveal it to us (v. 15). Wherever you are, keep going toward Christ. Let us all walk by the same rule, minding the same things. Minds these things.

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<sup>1</sup> 2 Tim. 4:7-8, I have fought a good fight, I have finished my course, I have kept the faith: Henceforth there is laid up for me a crown of righteousness, which the Lord, the righteous judge, shall give me at that day: and not to me only, but unto all them also that love his appearing.



# THE BELIEVER'S CONVERSATION

## PHILIPPIANS 3:16-21

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

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

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:

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

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

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.

Paul ends this chapter admonishing the believer to walk according to what he has already attained. He calls what the believer has attained a “rule” (Gal. 6:14-16<sup>1</sup>). The believer is to mind (pay attention to, be occupied with) the same things (those things declared in 3:7-15). We will look at the remainder of this chapter the way it is grammatically arranged. Verses 18-19 is a parenthetical expression. This means that though it has to do with verses 17-21, it can be lifted from the context without damaging the meaning. We will look first at verses 17, and 20-21. In these verses Paul encourages believers to walk in a certain way in this world.

In verse 17, he admonishes the brethren to “be followers together of me.” He is not telling them to follow *him*, but rather by

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<sup>1</sup> Gal. 6:14-16, But God forbid that I should glory, save in the cross of our Lord Jesus Christ, by whom the world is crucified unto me, and I unto the world. For in Christ Jesus neither circumcision availeth any thing, nor uncircumcision, but a new creature. And as many as walk according to this rule, peace be on them, and mercy, and upon the Israel of God.

employing the word “together,” he is stating that he is following someone, and they are to follow that someone along with him. He is following Christ, and since he is, he admonishes believers to follow along with him (3:3, 13-14<sup>1</sup>). The word “ensample” is not the same as an example. It means “a stamped print or pattern,” something “wrought” or “formed.” Paul used this terminology in other places (1 Cor. 4:16; 1 Thess. 1:6-7; 1 Tim. 1:15-16; 1 Peter 5:3<sup>2</sup>). They are also told to mark them that follow Christ together with Paul. Though verses 18-19 describes those who do *not* follow Christ, he does *not* tell the brethren to mark *them*. This passage is about following Christ.

That “conversation,” that walk is in heaven (v. 20). This has a two-fold meaning.

First, it has to do with the fact that the believer is, according to scriptures, already in heavenly places in Christ (Eph.2:6<sup>3</sup>). As Christ is the head of the church and the church is his body, the believer is with Christ *now* in glory.

Secondly, this has to do with the approach that Paul has used repeatedly in this epistle. It has to do with minding, desiring, and seeking heavenly things (vv. 9-10). This is where and upon whom

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<sup>1</sup> 3:3, For we are the circumcision, which worship God in the spirit, and rejoice in Christ Jesus, and have no confidence in the flesh. . . . 13-14, Brethren, I count not myself to have apprehended: but this one thing I do, forgetting those things which are behind, and reaching forth unto those things which are before, I press toward the mark for the prize of the high calling of God in Christ Jesus.

<sup>2</sup> 1 Cor. 4:16, Wherefore I beseech you, be ye followers of me.

1 Thess. 1:6-7, And ye became followers of us, and of the Lord, having received the word in much affliction, with joy of the Holy Ghost: So that ye were ensamples to all that believe in Macedonia and Achaia.

1 Tim. 1:15-16, This is a faithful saying, and worthy of all acceptance, that Christ Jesus came into the world to save sinners; of whom I am chief. Howbeit for this cause I obtained mercy, that in me first Jesus Christ might shew forth all longsuffering, for a pattern to them which should hereafter believe on him to life everlasting.

1 Peter 5:3, Neither as being lords over God's heritage, but being ensamples to the flock.

<sup>3</sup> Eph.2:6, And hath raised us up together, and made us sit together in heavenly places in Christ Jesus.



we are to set our sights and invest our affection as we look for and await the coming of the Savior, the Lord Jesus Christ (Col. 3:1-4<sup>1</sup>).

When Christ comes, Paul declares that He will change our vile bodies (v. 21). This also has two applications.

The first refers to the mystery which Paul addresses in 1 Cor. 15:50-54<sup>2</sup>. It is a mystery, and being such, it is declared rather than explained in the Word of God. The best that we can do is speculate about the particulars, but thank God, He has given us faith to believe His Word.

The second application has to do with the subject addressed in the context. It has to do with a day, yet to come, when the flesh will no longer be our constant companion and our present trouble. The change, the glorious change that will occur at His return, is that all that is flesh will be done away.

Consumed in the great conflagration, the heavens and the earth will be new, and this vile body, our carnal flesh, the body of this death will be destroyed, and what will be left will be only that new man, that new creature in Christ. This too is a mystery because being in the flesh we cannot fathom what it will be to worship Christ and honor Him as we one day will.

The fashioning of our body is that it will be like His. What we know of this is limited. We can and do marvel that the resurrected body of Christ was not subject to the laws of nature. Time and matter are not things that inhibited His glorified body. But again,

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<sup>1</sup> Col. 3:1-4, If ye then be risen with Christ, seek those things which are above, where Christ sitteth on the right hand of God. Set your affection on things above, not on things on the earth. For ye are dead, and your life is hid with Christ in God. When Christ, who is our life, shall appear, then shall ye also appear with him in glory.

<sup>2</sup> 1 Cor. 15:50-54, Now this I say, brethren, that flesh and blood cannot inherit the kingdom of God; neither doth corruption inherit incorruption. Behold, I shew you a mystery; We shall not all sleep, but we shall all be changed, In a moment, in the twinkling of an eye, at the last trump: for the trumpet shall sound, and the dead shall be raised incorruptible, and we shall be changed. For this corruptible must put on incorruption, and this mortal must put on immortality. So when this corruptible shall have put on incorruption, and this mortal shall have put on immortality, then shall be brought to pass the saying that is written, Death is swallowed up in victory.

this certainly has to do with being without sin, without the contrary flesh. What will that be like (1 John 2:28; 3:5; 4:17<sup>1</sup>)?

We can be assured that this will take place as it is declared because it is according to the working whereby he is able to subdue all things to Himself. This is merely a declaration of His sovereignty as rightful Lord because of His accomplished work (1 Cor. 15:24-26; Phil. 2:12-14<sup>2</sup>). He is able to perform what He has promised. This, by grace, the believer has attained and is to walk therein (Col. 2:6<sup>3</sup>).

The parenthetical expression of verse 18 states that there are those who would not walk together with Paul and would not be ensamples to the brethren. Paul did not approach this subject with some kind of vindictive joy. He was deeply saddened, even “weeping.” This emotion was generally expressed when he spoke of his brethren according to the flesh, Israelites (Rom. 9:1-3; 10:1<sup>4</sup>).

The reference here probably has to do with the concision—flesh cutters (3:2<sup>5</sup>). They were Judaizers who spoke well of Christ but required circumcision or keeping the law for justification and righteousness before God, and most assuredly as a rule of life. According to verse 17, it was the wrong rule. The description given of those that have brought such sorrow to Paul is the saddest of all

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<sup>1</sup> 1 John 2:28, And now, little children, abide in him; that, when he shall appear, we may have confidence, and not be ashamed before him at his coming. 3:5, And ye know that he was manifested to take away our sins; and in him is no sin. 4:17, Herein is our love made perfect, that we may have boldness in the day of judgment: because as he is, so are we in this world.

<sup>2</sup> 1 Cor. 15:24-26, Then cometh the end, when he shall have delivered up the kingdom to God, even the Father; when he shall have put down all rule and all authority and power. For he must reign, till he hath put all enemies under his feet. The last enemy that shall be destroyed is death.

Phil. 2:12-14, 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. For it is God which worketh in you both to will and to do of his good pleasure. Do all things without murmurings and disputings.

<sup>3</sup> Col. 2:6, As ye have therefore received Christ Jesus the Lord, so walk ye in him.

<sup>4</sup> Rom. 9:1-3, I say the truth in Christ, I lie not, my conscience also bearing me witness in the Holy Ghost, That I have great heaviness and continual sorrow in my heart. For I could wish that myself were accursed from Christ for my brethren, my kinsmen according to the flesh: . . . 10:1, Brethren, my heart's desire and prayer to God for Israel is, that they might be saved.

<sup>5</sup> 3:2, Beware of dogs, beware of evil workers, beware of the concision.

things, as it relates to any creature of God; they are *enemies of the cross*. This is not about the Roman gibbet. This speaks of enmity against Him who was crucified and what He accomplished on the cross. They, by seeking to give men something to do in the matter of salvation, remove the offence of the cross. The offence of the cross, according to this context is that there is no place where confidence in the flesh is permitted. An enemy of the cross is any and all who would consider the flesh as contributing ought to their salvation. They will die in their sins (v. 19a).

The remainder of the description that Paul gives of these enemies of the cross is a catalogue of the flesh (v. 19). Paul employs words that could simply be put in one category—self. Confidence in the flesh is about satisfaction and gratification, justifying and glorifying of self. It's all about me and not about Christ. Their god is “their belly.” No doubt this suggests looking inward rather than outward. Their “glory is in their shame.” Their shame is they trust in their flesh, and they glory in it. They “mind earthly things.” Their conversation and walk is not in heaven. Their interest and motivation is in things below and not things above.

Do not spend time on them or with them. “Brethren, be followers together of me, and mark them which walk so as ye have us for an ensample.”



# STANDING FAST

## PHILIPPIANS 4:1-6

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

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

3, And I intreat thee also, true yokefellow, help those women which laboured with me in the gospel, with Clement also, and with other my fellowlabourers, whose names are in the book of life.

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

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

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

**T**his chapter is Paul's closing of the epistle to the Philippians. If one theme could be set as a theme for this final word, it might well be contentment based on single mindedness concerning Christ (2:2, 5, 20; 3:15-16, 19<sup>1</sup>). That single mindedness is addressed again in the context of settling difficulties between the brethren and standing fast against those who oppose the faith or cause division.

The “therefore” (v. 1) covers all that Paul has written thus far. As he has previously, he speaks now to the brothers and sisters from a heart of concern and love. The term “dearly beloved,” with which

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<sup>1</sup> 2:2, Fulfil ye my joy, that ye be likeminded, having the same love, being of one accord, of one mind. . . . 5, Let this mind be in you, which was also in Christ Jesus. . . . 20, For I have no man likeminded, who will naturally care for your state.

3:15, Let us therefore, as many as be perfect, be thus minded: and if in any thing ye be otherwise minded, God shall reveal even this unto you. Nevertheless, whereto we have already attained, let us walk by the same rule, let us mind the same thing. . . . 19, Whose end is destruction, whose God is their belly, and whose glory is in their shame, who mind earthly things.

he begins and ends verse 1, is an assuring word that speaks not only to his personal affection for these brethren but also to the fact that, as the children of God, they are beloved in Christ. It is great comfort and encouragement to the believer to know that his brethren love him and especially that God Almighty has loved him.

Paul also expresses his desire to see them, be with them, and calls them his joy, referring to the fact that he has confidence that God has begun a good work in them, and that they have steadfastly contended for the faith. He also calls them his crown, referring to his high estimation of them as a jeweled ornament of the ministry that God has given him. Being such, he admonishes them to stand fast in the Lord (3:16). This admonition addresses not only the gospel but proper treatment of the brethren and is also about dealing with those who oppose the truth.

In verses 2-3, Paul addresses Epaphroditus concerning trouble between two women in the church. The precise issue of this dispute is not declared, but it is of enough weight that Paul, under inspiration, addresses it. Given the things that Paul has written about thus far, the disagreement might have been about the preachers with differing approaches to the gospel set forth in chapter 1 or the dogs, evil workers, and concision in chapter 3. The fact of this dispute might give a better sense to what Paul addressed in the first 12 verses of chapter 2. The important thing to recognize is that Heaven takes note of this disagreement. The fact that the dispute is between two women places no particular significance on the problem. Gender is not the issue. In Christ, as to salvation and standing before God, there is no difference between men and women (Gal. 3:27-29<sup>1</sup>).

The fact that this issue has reached heaven tells us a couple of things.

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<sup>1</sup> Gal. 3:27-29, For as many of you as have been baptized into Christ have put on Christ. There is neither Jew nor Greek, there is neither bond nor free, there is neither male nor female: for ye are all one in Christ Jesus. And if ye be Christ's, then are ye Abraham's seed, and heirs according to the promise.

First, it tells us that any dispute or disagreement among the brethren is noteworthy and affects the testimony of the gospel. When such a dispute occurred at Antioch, Paul accused Peter of despising the grace of God.

Secondly, though the issue was not necessarily gender based, the fact that it is between two women is of import in a different sense. The wresting of scripture has often put women in an insignificant light. Women, in Eastern culture, are considered property and generally held in low esteem, even today. For example, under Muslim Sharia Law, a woman who is raped can be stoned to death because it is assumed that she must have done something to tempt the man. The fact that this issue in our context is addressed shows that women are esteemed in the church. Christianity frees women of the restraints placed on them by religion and culture. This Philippian church began in a woman's house and we, in the western world, are indebted to her for the gospel reaching these shores.

Paul entreats these women to be of one mind, which suggests that their dispute is *not* gospel based. Looking to Christ is the prescribed remedy for the day, and no matter the issue that might arise, the gospel is bigger than any difference between these two sisters. Paul says of these two women that they have labored with him and Clement (a minister at Philippi) in the gospel and beseeches Epaphroditus to help these ladies to settle this issue because they are, as all the elect, written in the book of life.

Verse 4 is more than an excited utterance from Paul. It is truly the remedy for every difference between brothers or sisters. Though it is wise counsel to rejoice in the Lord, and every believer has reason to do so, it is nearly impossible to hold to personal issues when rejoicing in Christ. We are all sinners saved by grace, and because of Christ and His work, we all have the same righteous standing before God. Our sins and iniquities have been put away, and any problem that might come up among brethren melts into insignificance when we rejoice in what God has done for us all. Paul's admonition is in this context.

The fact of this is seen in verses 5-6. “Moderation” here, means “meekness and humility” and is to be known by all men. This is not about those outside the church but those of the household of faith. *Being known* does not suggest posture, or planned display, or what Paul calls voluntary humility. He is still speaking to the issue in vv. 2-3, and this goes back to 2:1-4<sup>1</sup>.

The last phrase of verse 5 is not a threat. It is a declaration that the issue at hand is not occurring in a vacuum. “The Lord is at hand” might address his omniscience, asserting that He knows what is going on here, but I think it really addresses His omnipresence, declaring that He is among them. That being so, action and attitudes must be weighed in light of His presence. Humility and meekness must be the order of the day as it will remedy the situation.

The word “careful” in v. 6 means anxious. “Do not let this situation cause anxiety among you. Take it to the Lord in prayer and supplication with thanksgiving for what He has done for you.” It is difficult to keep disputes going when you are praying for your brethren. Job's captivity was turned when he prayed for his friends, friends who were forgers of lies and physicians of no value.

The last phrase of verse 6 is sound advice. Though we are to confess our faults to one another, it is almost impossible to help settle a dispute without taking sides and further energizing the dispute. The best way is to let your requests be known to the Lord (Him alone). He can and will take care of the problem (James 1:5<sup>2</sup>).

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<sup>1</sup> 2:1-4, If there be therefore any consolation in Christ, if any comfort of love, if any fellowship of the Spirit, if any bowels and mercies, Fulfil ye my joy, that ye be likeminded, having the same love, being of one accord, of one mind. Let nothing be done through strife or vainglory; but in lowliness of mind let each esteem other better than themselves. Look not every man on his own things, but every man also on the things of others.

<sup>2</sup> James 1:5, If any of you lack wisdom, let him ask of God, that giveth to all men liberally, and upbraideth not; and it shall be given him.



# WONDRIOUS PEACE

## PHILIPPIANS 4:7

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

**T**hese words are part of the closing admonition of Paul in his letter to the Philippian church. This peace is the peace that Christ has given to believers. This peace is in and upon those who have been redeemed by Christ and made aware of it through the new birth, by the gospel. It is a peace that only the believer has, and *every believer* has it because Christ has bestowed it upon him.

“Thou wilt keep him in perfect peace, whose mind is stayed on thee: because he trusteth in thee” (Isa. 26:3).

“Peace I leave with you, my peace I give unto you: not as the world giveth, give I unto you. Let not your heart be troubled, neither let it be afraid” (John 14:27).

This peace is referred to as the “peace of God.” (Rom. 15:33<sup>1</sup>). God often inspired Paul to refer to Himself as the God of peace (1 Thess. 5:23; Heb. 13:20-21<sup>2</sup>). If this is the peace of God given by the *God of peace*, then some things are true of it.

The first true thing is that this peace is a gift, which means that it is given and not merited or earned by men. The words of John

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<sup>1</sup> Rom. 15:33, Now the God of peace be with you all. Amen.

<sup>2</sup> 1 Thess. 5:23, And the very God of peace sanctify you wholly; and I pray God your whole spirit and soul and body be preserved blameless unto the coming of our Lord Jesus Christ.

Heb. 13:20-21, Now the God of peace, that brought again from the dead our Lord Jesus, that great shepherd of the sheep, through the blood of the everlasting covenant, Make you perfect in every good work to do his will, working in you that which is wellpleasing in his sight, through Jesus Christ; to whom be glory for ever and ever. Amen.

14:27 assure us that it is a gift because our Lord said, “Peace I leave with you, my peace I give to you.”

Secondly, being a gift of God, it will never be taken away because the gifts and callings of God are without repentance.

Thirdly, if it is *of* God and given *by* God, then it is eternal (Eccl. 3:14-15<sup>1</sup>). It is the peace of God that will belong to the believer when the world and time is no more, which means the world and time have nothing to do with it and cannot affect it. Being of God, it is not the result of something you do. It was established on the cross (Col. 1:20<sup>2</sup>).

Paul says of this peace that it “passeth all understanding.” The word “passeth” means that this peace goes above and beyond, or surpasses, “understanding.” It is higher and on a loftier plane than understanding. Paul is not getting all ethereal here. He is not speaking of a state of mind where you become transcendent or dwell on some level that others cannot reach. He is not saying that the peace of God is beyond understanding of the peace itself. This peace is understood by every believer. The Spirit of God has revealed this peace to everyone whom God has given life (1 Cor. 2:9-12). Every believer understands this peace of God because it is spiritual peace, and the believer understands all things spiritual (1 Cor. 2:14-15; 1 John 2:20; 5:20<sup>3</sup>).

The believer understands that this peace was accomplished by Christ alone on the cross of Calvary (Col. 1:20). This peace was established on the cross when Christ, by His death, reconciled the elect to God. God was in Christ reconciling the world to Himself,

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<sup>1</sup> Eccl. 3:14-15, I know that, whatsoever God doeth, it shall be for ever: nothing can be put to it, nor any thing taken from it: and God doeth it, that men should fear before him. That which hath been is now; and that which is to be hath already been; and God requireth that which is past.

<sup>2</sup> Col. 1:20, And, having made peace through the blood of his cross, by him to reconcile all things unto himself; by him, I say, whether they be things in earth, or things in heaven.

<sup>3</sup> 1 Cor. 2:14-15; But the natural man receiveth not the things of the Spirit of God: for they are foolishness unto him: neither can he know them, because they are spiritually discerned. But he that is spiritual judgeth all things, yet he himself is judged of no man.

1 John 2:20, But ye have an unction from the Holy One, and ye know all things. . . . 5:20, And we know that the Son of God is come, and hath given us an understanding, that we may know him that is true, and we are in him that is true, even in his Son Jesus Christ. This is the true God, and eternal life.

not imputing their trespasses to them, and has given us the ministry of reconciliation (2 Cor. 5:19-21<sup>1</sup>). He does not charge His people with sin because He charged their sin to Christ (Rom. 4:6-8; 8:33-34<sup>2</sup>).

This peace of God is understood by the believer. It is the peace that God established by Christ and is the knowledge that we have been reconciled to God, accepted in Christ, and that God will remember our sins no more. It is called the peace of God because we are at peace with God because God sees us as perfect in Christ (Heb. 10:12-17<sup>3</sup>). The peace of God is the understanding that God is for us, and therefore it does not matter who might be against us. Yet it is called the peace that “passeth understanding.”

Paul is distinguishing between the peace of God that is well understood and that which is all around us that we understand but gives us no peace, and were it possible, would even destroy or hinder the peace of God. It is peace that is above and beyond what we understand about ourselves (our flesh) and our world. The distinction is between understanding the spiritual and understanding the natural. What we understand about the natural world, our flesh, gives us no peace.

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<sup>1</sup> 2 Cor. 5:19-21, To wit, that God was in Christ, reconciling the world unto himself, not imputing their trespasses unto them; and hath committed unto us the word of reconciliation. Now then we are ambassadors for Christ, as though God did beseech you by us: we pray you in Christ's stead, be ye reconciled to God. For he hath made him to be sin for us, who knew no sin; that we might be made the righteousness of God in him.

<sup>2</sup> Rom. 4:6-8; Even as David also describeth the blessedness of the man, unto whom God imputeth righteousness without works, Saying, Blessed are they whose iniquities are forgiven, and whose sins are covered. Blessed is the man to whom the Lord will not impute sin. Cometh this blessedness then upon the circumcision only, or upon the uncircumcision also? for we say that faith was reckoned to Abraham for righteousness. . . . 8:33-34, Who shall lay any thing to the charge of God's elect? It is God that justifieth. Who is he that condemneth? It is Christ that died, yea rather, that is risen again, who is even at the right hand of God, who also maketh intercession for us.

<sup>3</sup> Heb. 10:12-17, But this man, after he had offered one sacrifice for sins for ever, sat down on the right hand of God; From henceforth expecting till his enemies be made his footstool. For by one offering he hath perfected for ever them that are sanctified. Whereof the Holy Ghost also is a witness to us: for after that he had said before, This is the covenant that I will make with them after those days, saith the Lord, I will put my laws into their hearts, and in their minds will I write them; And their sins and iniquities will I remember no more.

The understanding of the fact of the peace of God goes above and beyond. It keeps our hearts and minds settled when we see things in the church that baffles us or are confronted with our inclination to act in a manner contrary to how we know we ought to treat and to feel about our brethren. The estate of our frailty and the bent of our flesh is not a comfortable or comforting thing. Our world, our inward selves it seems, are in a constant state of chaos. We understand that even the best of men are only men, and mankind cannot solve its own problems because mankind *is* its own problem. This understanding gives us no peace. But the peace of God goes above and beyond this understanding. Though as bad as it seems and though we cannot see *how* that all things work together for good to them that love God, to them who are called according to His purpose, we *know* they will. (Rom. 8:29-32<sup>1</sup>).

My sinfulness plagues me. I despise my impotency to quell my sinful desires and my palpable inability to do that which is good. I know that the old man in me is against God on every front. I am ashamed of the ease with which I can so readily hate. I am ashamed of the ease with which I can take sides in conflicts between brethren. I am ashamed of my bent to self-righteousness. I can say with David, “my sin is ever before me.” I understand my failures, my weaknesses, and my willful nature. I know and understand that I am of all men, most miserable, and I detest the body of this death on the one hand while sadly pursuing it on the other (Rom. 7:24-25<sup>2</sup>). This understanding gives me no peace.

But the peace of God goes above and beyond what I understand about me. I am at peace with God because Christ has freely forgiven my sin, has taken that which is against me, nailed it to the cross,

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<sup>1</sup> Rom. 8:29-32, For whom he did foreknow, he also did predestinate to be conformed to the image of his Son, that he might be the firstborn among many brethren. Moreover whom he did predestinate, them he also called: and whom he called, them he also justified: and whom he justified, them he also glorified. What shall we then say to these things? If God be for us, who can be against us? 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?

<sup>2</sup> Rom. 7:24-25, O wretched man that I am! who shall deliver me from the body of this death? I thank God through Jesus Christ our Lord. So then with the mind I myself serve the law of God; but with the flesh the law of sin.

and openly displayed His victory over it. I am at peace because God is not angry with me. I am at peace with God because God Himself has undertaken my cause. He has given me, in Christ, everything that is necessary to be found in His favor and accepted in His holy presence. He has done for me what I could not and would not do for myself. He has made me suitable to be a partaker of the inheritance of the saints in light. Christ is my peace (1 Cor. 1:30<sup>1</sup>).

This is the surpassing peace of which Paul speaks that will keep my heart and mind through Jesus Christ.

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<sup>1</sup> 1 Cor. 1:30, But of him are ye in Christ Jesus, who of God is made unto us wisdom, and righteousness, and sanctification, and redemption.



## SEEING AND PERCEIVING

### PHILIPPIANS 4:8-9

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.

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.

**T**his passage is an admonition that wraps all that Paul has said into a precise package. Within the context, this is divine and understandable instruction for the believer. It is a twofold admonition, the first enabling the second. The first has to do with seeing; the second has to do with perception conditioned upon what is seen.

These two form the life of the child of God in relation to his heavenly Father and is also the way of looking at the brethren in order to fulfill the admonitions that have been presented thus far. In consideration of what we see, what we mind, what we set our affection on, our perception of all else is established. The believer has a worldview that is based on his understanding of God. A wrong view of Christ, or a lack of looking to Him, skews our perception. Circumstance alters our perception when our eyes are looking at the wrong subject. With our eyes on Christ, circumstance plays no part in perception. Once again, Paul addresses our mind and sets before us things that we are to consider, to think on—"think on these things."

Paul sets before us a list, if you will, of things we are to consider. Each of these things are worthy of consideration individually, but they are actually a composite of several of Christ's attributes. As we

look at each, we can find no one but Christ to whom we can truly apply these things as being intrinsic to His person.

“Whatsoever things are true.” *He* is the one true thing. He is the truth and embodiment of all that is true. He is the true body of divinity.

“Whatsoever things are honest.” *He* is the only honest or venerable thing (margin). “Venerable” means worthy of respect or reverence. Holy and reverend is His name. He is the only one who is to be revered.

“Whatsoever things are just.” *He* is the Just One. From the lips of Ananias, Saul of Tarsus was told that he was chosen to see the Just One and to be His witness in the world. Christ is the Just God and the Savior. He fixed it so God could be just and justify the believer. He lived a just life and died a just death for sin, though He knew no sin. He died, the Just for the unjust.

“Whatsoever things are pure.” Can we even imagine this accolade being attributed to anyone but Him? Our limited concept of this word “pure” is bound up in what the scriptures say about it. It means “untainted.” He took on human flesh, yet without sin. It means “without spot or blemish,” as the perfect sacrifice must be. The word pure is applied to many things in scripture, and all have to do with the worship of God. The mercy seat is pure gold as is the plate on the miter of the High Priest. The anointing oil has pure myrrh in it. God's word is pure, and Christ is the Word. His eyes are pure. Christ is pure.

“Whatsoever things are lovely.” The bride (the church) said, “He is altogether lovely.” This word also means pleasing and the Father said of Him, “This is my beloved Son in whom I am well pleased.”

“Whatsoever things are of good report.” As we have seen in our look at the gospel, that grand person and His work are the only good report in this world. He is the good report and what He has accomplished is reported in all the Scriptures. He alone is *virtue* personified. He is *goodness*. He is worthy of all *praise* because by Him, through Him, and to Him are all things. To see Him, to look



upon Him, to consider Him is the believer's vocation. On Him we are to set our affection. *He* is the object of faith.

Seeing Him, looking to Him governs our perception, especially as we live among our brothers and sisters. Looking to Him we are enabled to esteem our brethren better than ourselves. When we see our brethren in Christ, when we think of them in Christ, our perception of them rises above what we see in the flesh. Circumstance, frailty, weakness, sinfulness, and such are washed away in the glory of what Christ has accomplished for them and what He is made to be for them in the presence of God. When we see Christ and our brethren in Him, our brothers and sisters are true, honest, just, pure, lovely, of good report, and virtuous. Because of Christ, they are righteous, perfect, and without sin before God, and it is not difficult to esteem them better than ourselves.

Scott Richardson once said, "If our vision could be completely filled with Christ, nothing we looked at would be evil, and nothing would be out of place." This also applies to how we are to think of those who are enemies of the cross. Though we are to "contend for the faith once delivered to the saints" and refuse to take part or join hands with those who would diminish the person and work of Christ, we are to also see all things as serving their particular purpose and holding their particular place in the economy of God (1 Cor. 11:19<sup>1</sup>). "Think on these things" (v. 8).

Paul finishes this passage by reminding the believer that these things are not new revelations but are part and parcel with the declaration of the gospel. These things are what they have learned as they have learned Christ. They have learned these things because they are taught of the Father (John 6:45<sup>2</sup>). These things are what they have *received*. They have received mercy and grace. Grace has bestowed upon them what they could not deserve, and mercy has kept back from them what they do deserve. They have received

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<sup>1</sup> 1 Cor. 11:19, For there must be also heresies among you, that they which are approved may be made manifest among you.

<sup>2</sup> John 6:45, It is written in the prophets, And they shall be all taught of God. Every man therefore that hath heard, and hath learned of the Father, cometh unto me.

Christ, and as they have received him, so they are to walk in Him. They have learned and received these things because they have heard the gospel. It is God that has given them the hearing ear, the seeing eye, and faith to believe. Paul is not requiring things that you do not already know but things that have been granted you through the preaching of the gospel. Ponder, meditate, and “think on these things.”

Paul again points at himself as an example of a follower of Christ (3:17<sup>1</sup>). What he tells the brethren to think on is what he has preached to them and what they have seen operating in him. And, just as we saw previously, the peace of God shall be with you, the same glorious peace that passeth all understanding. A specific example of this is how Paul related to those who preached with contention, supposing to increase his bonds and those who preached with love and sincerity (1:14-18<sup>2</sup>). He declared that they both preached Christ, and he did therein rejoice. Seeing Christ informs our perception of all that is.

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<sup>1</sup> 3:17, Brethren, be followers together of me, and mark them which walk so as ye have us for an ensample.

<sup>2</sup> 1:14-18, And many of the brethren in the Lord, waxing confident by my bonds, are much more bold to speak the word without fear. Some indeed preach Christ even of envy and strife; and some also of good will: The one preach Christ of contention, not sincerely, supposing to add affliction to my bonds: But the other of love, knowing that I am set for the defence of the gospel. What then? notwithstanding, every way, whether in pretence, or in truth, Christ is preached; and I therein do rejoice, yea, and will rejoice.

## CONCLUDING

### PHILIPPIANS 4:10-23

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

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

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

13, I can do all things through Christ which strengtheneth me.

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

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.

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

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

18, But I have all, and abound: I am full, having received of Epaphroditus the things which were sent from you, an odour of a sweet smell, a sacrifice acceptable, wellpleasing to God.

19, But my God shall supply all your need according to his riches in glory by Christ Jesus.

20, Now unto God and our Father be glory for ever and ever. Amen.

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

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

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

In these verses, Paul concludes this epistle to the Philippians. He does so in a manner to encourage the brethren and to thank them for their allegiance and kindness toward him and the gospel he preached. This church has suffered for the gospel's sake, stood with Paul for the most part, and has had a continuing and fruitful relationship with the apostle.

Verse 10 seems to suggest that there was a time when the church at Philippi was not communicating with Paul. He rejoices greatly that "*now* at the last," the care they had previously shown to him had "*flourished again*." The word "again" and the marginal reading, "is revived" certainly indicates a break in communication, if not a break in fellowship. The word "flourish" suggests trees bearing fruit in season, and rather than a rebuke or reproof, he treats this break in communication as a matter of course, as a season when fruit is not produced. He treats the entire matter as if it had not happened in some realm outside the sovereign order of God's providence (1:6, 12, 19<sup>1</sup>).

This is a good lesson for all of us when our brothers or sisters seem to shut down and communication ceases. May God give us grace to count is as winter and wait patiently for the time of flowering and fruitfulness. We are told that the Lord's people will not quit, but there are ample examples of pauses when folks are occupied with the cares of this world, or have fallen into some sinful situation, or for a time, fallen under the spell of legalists as did Simon Peter at Antioch. Paul told Timothy to not judge a thing before it's time because we are not privy to the intricate workings of providence. However, knowing that all things are working together for our good should help us not to curse second causes. The words "ye lacked opportunity" is certainly a reference to divine providence.

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<sup>1</sup> 1:6, 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: . . . 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; . . . 19, For I know that this shall turn to my salvation through your prayer, and the supply of the Spirit of Jesus Christ,

In verses 11-12 Paul continues to encourage the brethren and shows that whatever the problem was, he was okay with it. Whether at the first, when they were continually in contact with him (v. 15) or during the time when they were not, he was never in want because believing God he knew that whatever the circumstance, he was precisely where he was supposed to be. He knew this because God had instructed him, teaching him that his steps were ordered, and the place where he was fell out for the furtherance of the gospel (v. 12).

Verse 13 is one of those verses that is often quoted but rarely understood. Some think that this is a mantra that transfers a kind of omnipotence to *anyone* who *quotes* it. This verse is not a tap into super-human ability to accomplish great things, though religion often uses it to convince men that they have a source of unlimited power. Verse 13 has to do with the context in which you find it. This verse has to do with *contentment* with whatsoever state you find yourself. Whether *abased* or *abounding*, *hungry* or *full*, *abounding* or *suffering need*—I can do all *these* things thorough Christ who strengthens me. This verse is simply another way of saying that the Lord is with us always. Whatever the situation that God has ordained for us, the glory and our ability to handle it belongs to Christ who strengthens us.

Verses 14-16 is again an example of the careful manner in which Paul assures these brethren that whatever brought about their break in communication has no bearing on his affection for them. He assures them that he is thankful to them and for them. They had sought to meet his financial needs though he had not required or asked them to do so (v. 17). Again, the reader is struck with Paul's generosity of spirit, and we should be encouraged to do likewise. The perspective is altered when the mind is stayed on Christ, and all things are seen as part of His good purpose.

Verse 18 gives us a sense of why Paul wrote as he did. He viewed things in their proper perspective. Being imprisoned, he declares that he had all, that he abounded, and he was full. He had received the gift they had sent to him by Epaphroditus. His description of

the gift and the spirit in which it was sent relates to the Old Testament sacrifices, the sacrifice of Christ, the preaching of the gospel, and the love and kindness of the brethren (Gen. 8:21; Eph. 5:2; 2 Cor. 2:14-15<sup>1</sup>). Such sacrifice is accepted and is pleasing to the Lord (1 Pet. 2:5; Heb. 13:15-16<sup>2</sup>).

The source of all such blessing, indeed *all* blessings, is God, who is not only able but most assuredly shall supply all your need according to His riches in glory by Jesus Christ (v. 19). His riches are inexhaustible, but they all have to do with His wisdom and His works (Ps. 104:24; Eph. 2:4, 7<sup>3</sup>). His wisdom and His works both relate to the salvation accomplished by His Son. So, all good things flow from God through Christ, and they will redound to His glory in the salvation of the elect (v. 20).

Eph. 1:3-14;

3, Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, who hath blessed us with all spiritual blessings in heavenly places in Christ:

4, According as he hath chosen us in him before the foundation of the world, that we should be holy and without blame before him in love:

5, Having predestinated us unto the adoption of children by

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<sup>1</sup> Gen. 8:21, And the LORD smelled a sweet savour; and the LORD said in his heart, I will not again curse the ground any more for man's sake; for the imagination of man's heart is evil from his youth; neither will I again smite any more every thing living, as I have done.

Eph. 5:2, And walk in love, as Christ also hath loved us, and hath given himself for us an offering and a sacrifice to God for a sweetsmelling savour.

2 Cor. 2:14-15, Now thanks be unto God, which always causeth us to triumph in Christ, and maketh manifest the savour of his knowledge by us in every place. For we are unto God a sweet savour of Christ, in them that are saved, and in them that perish:

<sup>2</sup> 1 Pet. 2:5, Ye also, as lively stones, are built up a spiritual house, an holy priesthood, to offer up spiritual sacrifices, acceptable to God by Jesus Christ.

Heb. 13:15-16, By him therefore let us offer the sacrifice of praise to God continually, that is, the fruit of our lips giving thanks to his name. But to do good and to communicate forget not: for with such sacrifices God is well pleased.

<sup>3</sup> Ps. 104:24, O LORD, how manifold are thy works! in wisdom hast thou made them all: the earth is full of thy riches.

Eph. 2:4, But God, who is rich in mercy, for his great love wherewith he loved us. . . . 7, That in the ages to come he might shew the exceeding riches of his grace in his kindness toward us through Christ Jesus.

Jesus Christ to himself, according to the good pleasure of his will,

6, To the praise of the glory of his grace, wherein he hath made us accepted in the beloved.

7, In whom we have redemption through his blood, the forgiveness of sins, according to the riches of his grace;

8, Wherein he hath abounded toward us in all wisdom and prudence;

9, Having made known unto us the mystery of his will, according to his good pleasure which he hath purposed in himself:

10, That in the dispensation of the fulness of times he might gather together in one all things in Christ, both which are in heaven, and which are on earth; even in him:

11, In whom also we have obtained an inheritance, being predestinated according to the purpose of him who worketh all things after the counsel of his own will:

12, That we should be to the praise of his glory, who first trusted in Christ.

13, In whom ye also trusted, after that ye heard the word of truth, the gospel of your salvation: in whom also after that ye believed, ye were sealed with that holy Spirit of promise,

14, Which is the earnest of our inheritance until the redemption of the purchased possession, unto the praise of his glory.

Paul's final salutations to the saints in Philippi are from the brethren that are with Paul in the house where he is arrested. It appears from verse 22, that some of the Romans ("Caesar's household" that guard and attend Him) have received the grace of God. His desire and prayer, as always, is that the grace of God be with them.

